ART HISTORY

Boundless

LibreTexts™

Art History

Boundless

This text is disseminated via the Open Education Resource (OER) LibreTexts Project (https://LibreTexts.org) and like the thousands of other texts available within this powerful platform, it is freely available for reading, printing, and "consuming."

The LibreTexts mission is to bring together students, faculty, and scholars in a collaborative effort to provide an accessible, and comprehensive platform that empowers our community to develop, curate, adapt, and adopt openly licensed resources and technologies; through these efforts we can reduce the financial burden born from traditional educational resource costs, ensuring education is more accessible for students and communities worldwide.

Most, but not all, pages in the library have licenses that may allow individuals to make changes, save, and print this book. Carefully consult the applicable license(s) before pursuing such effects. Instructors can adopt existing LibreTexts texts or Remix them to quickly build course-specific resources to meet the needs of their students. Unlike traditional textbooks, LibreTexts' web based origins allow powerful integration of advanced features and new technologies to support learning.

LibreTexts is the adaptable, user-friendly non-profit open education resource platform that educators trust for creating, customizing, and sharing accessible, interactive textbooks, adaptive homework, and ancillary materials. We collaborate with individuals and organizations to champion open education initiatives, support institutional publishing programs, drive curriculum development projects, and more.

The LibreTexts libraries are Powered by NICE CXone Expert and was supported by the Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Project, the California Education Learning Lab, the UC Davis Office of the Provost, the UC Davis Library, the California State University Affordable Learning Solutions Program, and Merlot. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1246120, 1525057, and 1413739.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation nor the US Department of Education.

Have questions or comments? For information about adoptions or adaptions contact info@LibreTexts.org or visit our main website at https://LibreTexts.org.

This text was compiled on 09/23/2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

1: Thinking and Talking About Art

- 1.1: What is Art?
- 1.2: Visual Elements
- 1.3: Content
- 1.4: Art in Society
- 1.5: Historical Context

2: Prehistoric Art

- 2.1: The Stone Age
- 2.2: The Paleolithic Period
- 2.3: The Mesolithic Period
- 2.4: The Neolithic Period
- 2.5: The Bronze Age

3: Art of the Ancient Near East

- 3.1: Mesopotamia
- 3.2: Assyria
- 3.3: Neo-Babylonia
- 3.4: Persia

4: Ancient Egyptian Art

- 4.1: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art
- 4.2: The Early Dynastic Period
- 4.3: The Old Kingdom
- 4.4: The Middle Kingdom
- 4.5: The New Kingdom
- 4.6: Late Egyptian Art

5: Art of the Aegean Civilizations

- 5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age
- 5.2: Minoan Art
- 5.3: Mycenaean Art

6: Ancient Greece

- 6.1: Introduction to Ancient Greece
- 6.2: The Geometric Period
- 6.3: The Orientalizing Period
- 6.4: The Archaic Period
- 6.5: The Early Classical Period
- 6.6: The High Classical Period
- 6.7: The Hellenistic Period

7: The Etruscans

- 7.1: Early Etruscan Art
- 7.2: Later Etruscan Art

8: The Romans

- 8.1: The Romans
- 8.2: The Republic
- 8.3: The Early Empire
- 8.4: The Nervan-Antonines
- 8.5: The Decline of the Roman Empire
- 8.6: Early Jewish and Christian Art

9: The Byzantines

- 9.1: Early Byzantine Art
- 9.2: Middle Byzantine Art
- 9.3: Late Byzantine Art

10: Islamic Art

- 10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art

11: Art of South and Southeast Asia Before 1200 CE

- 11.1: Early Indus Valley Civilizations
- 11.2: Buddhist Art
- 11.3: Java and Cambodia
- 11.4: Art of Southeast Asia

12: China and Korea After 1279 CE

- 12.1: The Mongols
- 12.2: The Yuan Dynasty
- 12.3: The Ming Dynasty
- 12.4: The Qing Dynasty
- 12.5: Modern Chinese Painting
- 12.6: Korea- The Joseon Dynasty
- 12.7: Modern Korean Art

13: Japan Before 1333 CE

- 13.1: Prehistoric Japan
- 13.2: Buddhist Art in Japan
- 13.3: The Heian Period
- 13.4: The Kamakura Period

14: Native-American Art Before 1300 CE

- 14.1: The New World
- 14.2: Mesoamerica
- 14.3: South America
- 14.4: North America

15: Africa Before 1800 CE

- 15.1: Ancient Africa
- 15.2: Sculpture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations
- 15.3: Architecture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations

16: Early Medieval Europe

- 16.1: The Early Middle Ages
- 16.2: The Vikings
- 16.3: The Carolingians
- 16.4: The Ottonians

17: Romanesque Art

- 17.1: The Romanesque Period
- 17.2: Romanesque Architecture
- 17.3: Romanesque Sculpture
- 17.4: Other Romanesque Arts
- 17.5: Normandy and England

18: Gothic Art

- 18.1: Introduction to Gothic Art
- 18.2: Gothic Architecture
- 18.3: Gothic Sculpture
- 18.4: Gothic Painting
- 18.5: Gothic Metalwork
- 18.6: Italy in the Gothic Period

19: The Italian Renaissance

- 19.1: The Italian Renaissance
- 19.2: Renaissance Architecture
- 19.3: Renaissance Sculpture
- 19.4: Renaissance Painting
- 19.5: The High Renaissance
- 19.6: Mannerism

20: The Northern Renaissance

- 20.1: The Northern Renaissance
- 20.2: Painting in the Northern Renaissance
- 20.3: Books of the Northern Renaissance
- 20.4: Architecture of the Northern Renaissance
- 20.5: Sculpture of the Northern Renaissance
- 20.6: Textiles of the Northern Renaissance

21: The Baroque Period

- 21.1: The Baroque Period
- 21.2: Architecture of the Baroque Period
- 21.3: Sculpture of the Baroque Period
- 21.4: Painting of the Baroque Period

- 21.5: The Dutch Painters

22: South and Southeast Asia After 1200 CE

- 22.1: India
- 22.2: Jain Art
- 22.3: Hindu Art
- 22.4: Sultanate of Delhi
- 22.5: Vijayanagar Empire
- 22.6: The Nayak Dynasty
- 22.7: The Mughal Period
- 22.8: India under British Imperialism
- 22.9: Contemporary Indian Art
- 22.10: Thai Art
- 22.11: Burmese Art
- 22.12: Vietnamese Art
- 22.13: Indonesian Art

23: Chinese and Korean Art Before 1279 CE

- 23.1: The Middle Kingdom
- 23.2: The Neolithic Age
- 23.3: The Bronze Age
- 23.4: The Qin Dynasty
- 23.5: The Han Dynasty
- 23.6: The Six Dynasties Period
- 23.7: The Tang Dynasty
- 23.8: The Song Dynasty
- 23.9: Korea

24: Japan After 1333 CE

- 24.1: The Muromachi Period
- 24.2: The Momoyama Period
- 24.3: The Edo Period
- 24.4: The Modern Period

25: The Americas After 1300 CE

- 25.1: Mesoamerica
- 25.2: The Aztecs
- 25.3: The Incas
- 25.4: North America

26: Oceania

- 26.1: The Rise of Pacific Cultures
- 26.2: Australia
- 26.3: Wood Carving in Oceania
- 26.4: Polynesia
- 26.5: Art of New Zealand
- 26.6: Hawaiian Art
- 26.7: Modern Oceanic Art

27: Africa in the Modern Period

- 27.1: Religious Art in Africa
- 27.2: African Clothmaking
- 27.3: Other African Art
- 27.4: Contemporary Art

28: European and American Art in the 18th and 19th Centuries

- 28.1: The Enlightenment
- 28.2: Rococo
- 28.3: Neoclassicism
- 28.4: Neoclassicism and Romanticism
- 28.5: The Gothic Revival
- 28.6: The Empire Style
- 28.7: Academic Art
- 28.8: Realism
- 28.9: Impressionism
- 28.10: The Rise of Modernism
- 28.11: The Beginning of Modern Architecture
- 28.12: Photography

29: Europe and America from 1900-1950 CE

- 29.1: European Art in the Early 20th Century
- 29.2: Europe from 1920-1945 CE
- 29.3: Modernism in America
- 29.4: Art in the US during the 1920s and 1930s
- 29.5: Modern Architecture
- 29.6: Canadian Painting
- 29.7: The Mexican Renaissance
- 29.8: Art in Brazil
- 29.9: Cuban Art
- 29.10: Abstract Expressionism

30: Global Art Since 1950 CE

- 30.1: The World Since 1950 CE
- 30.2: The Art World Grows
- 30.3: Dematerialization
- 30.4: Modern Architecture
- 30.5: Postmodernism
- 30.6: New Media for Art

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

*A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Thinking and Talking About Art

1.1: What is Art?

1.2: Visual Elements

1.3: Content

1.4: Art in Society

1.5: Historical Context

This page titled 1: Thinking and Talking About Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.1: What is Art?

What is Art?

Interactions between the elements and principles of art help artists to organize sensorially pleasing works of art while also giving viewers a framework within which to analyze and discuss aesthetic ideas.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the frameworks we can use to analyze and discuss works of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The interplay between the principles and elements of art provide a language with which to discuss and analyze works of art.
- The principles of art include: *movement*, *unity*, *harmony*, *variety*, *balance*, *contrast*, *proportion* and *pattern*.
- The elements of art include: *texture*, *form*, *space*, *shape*, *color*, *value* and *line* .
- How best to define the term art is a subject of constant contention.
- Since conceptual art and postmodern theory came into prominence, it has been proven that anything can be termed art.

Key Terms

- **Formalism**:The study of art by analyzing and comparing form and style—the way objects are made and their purely visual aspects.

What is Art?

Art is a highly diverse range of human activities engaged in creating visual, auditory, or performed artifacts— artworks—that express the author's imaginative or technical skill, and are intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power.

The oldest documented forms of art are visual arts, which include images or objects in fields like painting, sculpture, printmaking , photography, and other visual media . Architecture is often included as one of the visual arts; however, like the decorative arts, it involves the creation of objects where the practical considerations of use are essential, in a way that they usually are not in another visual art, like a painting.

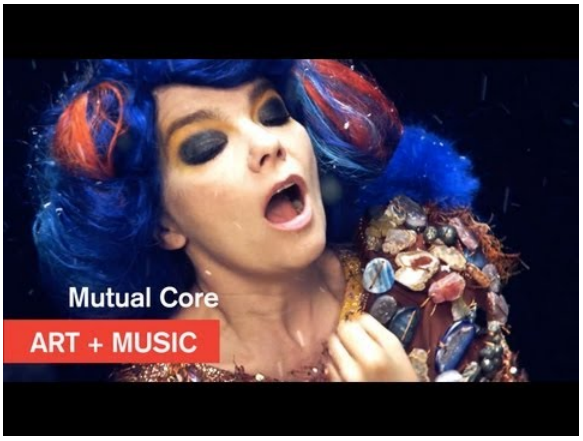
Art may be characterized in terms of mimesis (its representation of reality), expression, communication of emotion, or other qualities. Though the definition of what constitutes art is disputed and has changed over time, general descriptions center on the idea of imaginative or technical skill stemming from human agency and creation. When it comes to visually identifying a work of art, there is no single set of values or aesthetic traits. A Baroque painting will not necessarily share much with a contemporary performance piece, but they are both considered art.

Despite the seemingly indefinable nature of art, there have always existed certain formal guidelines for its aesthetic judgment and analysis. Formalism is a concept in art theory in which an artwork's artistic value is determined solely by its form, or how it is made. Formalism evaluates works on a purely visual level, considering medium and compositional elements as opposed to any reference to realism , context, or content.

Art is often examined through the interaction of the *principles* and *elements* of art. The principles of art include *movement*, *unity*, *harmony*, *variety*, *balance*, *contrast*, *proportion* and *pattern*. The elements include *texture*, *form*, *space*, *shape*, *color*, *value* and *line*. The various interactions between the elements and principles of art help artists to organize sensorially pleasing works of art while also giving viewers a framework within which to analyze and discuss aesthetic ideas.

Ecce Homo, Caravaggio, 1605: This is an example of a Baroque painting.

Björk, *Mutual Core,* 2011: This is an example of a contemporary performance piece.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

What Does Art Do?

A fundamental purpose inherent to most artistic disciplines is the underlying intention to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion.

Learning Objectives

Examine the communication, utilitarian, aesthetic, therapeutic, and intellectual purposes of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The decorative arts add aesthetic and design values to the objects we use every day, such as a glass or a chair.
- Art therapy is a relatively young type of therapy that focuses on the therapeutic benefits of art-making, using different methods and theories.
- Since the introduction of conceptual art and postmodern theory, it has been proven that anything can, in fact, be termed art.

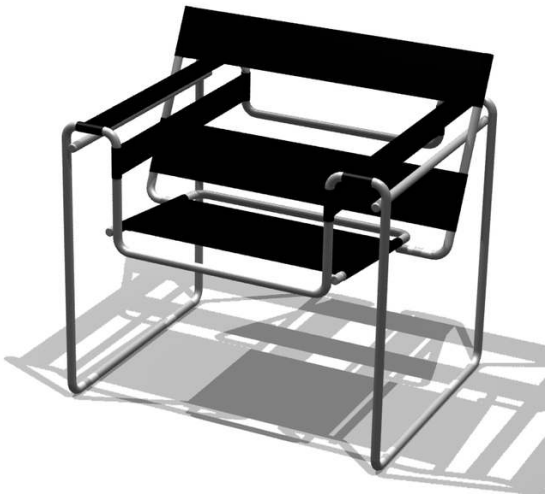
- It can be said that the fine arts represent an exploration of the human condition and the attempt at a deeper understanding of life.

Key Terms

- **human condition**:The characteristics, key events, and situations which compose the essentials of human existence, such as birth, growth, emotionality, aspiration, conflict, and mortality.
- **fine arts**:Visual art created principally for its aesthetic value.
- **aesthetic**:Concerned with artistic impact or appearance.

A fundamental purpose common to most art forms is the underlying intention to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion. However, the term is incredibly broad and is broken up into numerous sub-categories that lead to utilitarian , decorative, therapeutic, communicative, and intellectual ends. In its broadest form, art may be considered an exploration of the human condition, or a product of the human experience.

The decorative arts add aesthetic and design values to everyday objects, such as a glass or a chair, transforming them from a mere utilitarian object to something aesthetically beautiful. Entire schools of thought exist based on the concepts of design theory intended for the physical world.



Bauhaus chair by Marcel Breuer: The decorative arts add aesthetic and design values to everyday objects.

Art can function therapeutically as well, an idea that is explored in art therapy. While definitions and practices vary, art therapy is generally understood as a form of therapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication. It is a relatively young discipline, first introduced around the mid-20th century.

Historically, the fine arts were meant to appeal to the human intellect, though currently there are no true boundaries. Typically, fine art movements have reacted to each other both intellectually and aesthetically throughout the ages. With the introduction of conceptual art and postmodern theory, practically anything can be termed art. In general terms, the fine arts represent an exploration of the human condition and the attempt to experience a deeper understanding of life.

What Does Art Mean?

The meaning of art is shaped by the intentions of the artist as well as the feelings and ideas it engenders in the viewer.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the perspectives behind the meaning of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The meaning of art is often shared among the members of a given society and dependent upon cultural context.
- The nature of art has been described by philosopher Richard Wollheim as “one of the most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture.”
- Some purposes of art may be to express or communicate emotions and ideas, to explore and appreciate formal elements for their own sake, or to serve as representation.
- Art, at its simplest, is a form of communication and means whatever it is intended to mean by the artist.

Key Terms

- **mimesis**:The representation of aspects of the real world, especially human actions, in literature and art.

The meaning of art is often culturally specific, shared among the members of a given society and dependent upon cultural context. The purpose of works of art may be to communicate political, spiritual or philosophical ideas, to create a sense of beauty (see aesthetics), to explore the nature of perception, for pleasure, or to generate strong emotions. Its purpose may also be seemingly nonexistent.

The nature of art has been described by philosopher Richard Wollheim as “one of the most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture.” It has been defined as a vehicle for the expression or communication of emotions and ideas, a means for exploring and appreciating formal elements for their own sake, and as mimesis or representation. More recently, thinkers influenced by Martin Heidegger have interpreted art as the means by which a community develops for itself a medium for self-expression and interpretation.

Helen Frankenthaler, 1956: A photograph of the American artist Helen Frankenthaler in her studio in 1956.

Art, in its broadest sense, is a form of communication. It means whatever the artist intends it to mean, and this meaning is shaped by the materials, techniques, and forms it makes use of, as well as the ideas and feelings it creates in its viewers . Art is an act of expressing feelings, thoughts, and observations.

What Makes Art Beautiful?

Beauty in terms of art refers to an interaction between line, color, texture, sound, shape, motion, and size that is pleasing to the senses.

Learning Objectives

Define “aesthetics” and “beauty” as they relate to art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Beauty in art can be difficult to put into words due to a seeming lack of accurate language.
- An aesthetic judgment cannot be an empirical judgment but must instead be processed on a more intuitive level.

- Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and appreciation of art, beauty, and taste. Aesthetics is central to any exploration of art.
- For Immanuel Kant, the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a subjective, but common, human truth.
- For Arthur Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the freest and most pure and truthful that intellect can be, and is therefore beautiful.
- Art is often intended to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion.

Key Terms

- **aesthetics**:The branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, taste, and the creation and appreciation of beauty.
- **intuitive**:Spontaneous, without requiring conscious thought; easily understood or grasped by instinct.

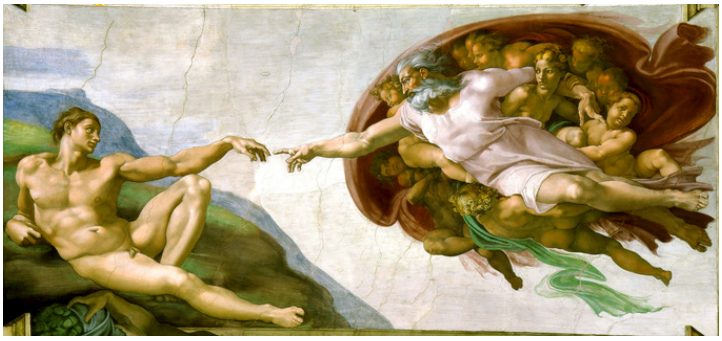
What makes art beautiful is a complicated concept, since beauty is subjective and can change based on context. However, there is a basic human instinct, or internal appreciation, for harmony, balance, and rhythm which can be defined as beauty. Beauty in terms of art usually refers to an interaction between line, color, texture , sound, shape, motion, and size that is pleasing to the senses.

Aesthetic Art

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and appreciation of art, beauty, and taste. Aesthetics is central to any exploration of art. The word “aesthetic” is derived from the Greek “aisthetikos,” meaning “esthetic, sensitive, or sentient. ” In practice, aesthetic judgment refers to the sensory contemplation or appreciation of an object (not necessarily a work of art), while artistic judgment refers to the recognition, appreciation, or criticism of a work of art.

Numerous philosophers have attempted to tackle the concept of beauty and art. For Immanuel Kant, the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a subjective, but common, human truth. He argued that all people should agree that a rose is beautiful if it indeed is. There are many common conceptions of beauty; for example, Michelangelo’s paintings in the Sistine Chapel are widely recognized as beautiful works of art. However, Kant believes beauty cannot be reduced to any basic set of characteristics or features.

For Arthur Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the freest and most pure that intellect can be. He believes that only in terms of aesthetics do we contemplate perfection of form without any kind of worldly agenda.



Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, The Sistine Chapel, 1508-1512:

Beauty in art can be difficult to put into words due to a seeming lack of accurate language. An aesthetic judgment cannot be an empirical judgment but must instead be processed on a more intuitive level.

Art and Human Emotion

Sometimes beauty is not the artist’s ultimate goal. Art is often intended to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion. Artists may express something so that their audience is stimulated in some way—creating feelings, religious faith, curiosity, interest, identification with a group, memories, thoughts, or creativity. For example, performance art often does not aim to please the audience but instead evokes feelings, reactions, conversations, or questions from the viewer . In these cases, aesthetics may be an irrelevant measure of “beautiful” art.

Who Is an Artist?

An artist is a person who is involved in the wide range of activities that are related to creating art.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the evolution of the term “artist” and its predecessors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In ancient Greece and Rome there was no word for “artist,” but there were nine muses who oversaw a different field of human creation related to music and poetry, with no muse for visual arts.
- During the Middle Ages , the word “artista” referred to something resembling “craftsman.”
- The first division into major and minor arts dates back to the 1400s with the work of Leon Battista Alberti.
- The European Academies of the 16th century formally solidified the gap between the fine and the applied arts which exists in varying degrees to this day.
- Currently an artist can be defined as anyone who calls him/herself an artist.

Key Terms

- **muses**:Goddesses of the inspiration of literature, science, and the arts in Greek mythology.
- **Pop art**:An art movement that emerged in the 1950s that presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including imagery from popular culture such as advertising and news.
- **fine arts**:The purely aesthetic arts, such as music, painting, and poetry, as opposed to industrial or functional arts such as engineering or carpentry.

An artist is a person who is involved in the wide range of activities that are related to creating art. The word has transformed over time and context, but the modern understanding of the term denotes that, ultimately, an artist is anyone who calls him/herself an artist.

In ancient Greece and Rome, there was no word for “artist.” The Greek word “techne” is the closest that exists to “art” and means “mastery of any art or craft.” From the Latin “tecnicus” derives the English words “technique,” “technology,” and “technical.” From these words we can denote the ancient standard of equating art with manual labor or craft.

Each of the nine muses of ancient Greece oversaw a different field of human creation. The creation of poetry and music was considered to be divinely inspired and was therefore held in high esteem. However, there was no muse identified with the painting and sculpture; ancient Greek culture held these art forms in low social regard, considering work of this sort to be more along the lines of manual labor.

During the Middle Ages, the word “artista” referred to something resembling “craftsman,” or student of the arts. The first division into “major” and “minor” arts dates back to the 1400s with the work of Leon Battista Alberti, which focused on the importance of the intellectual skills of the artist rather than the manual skills of a craftsman. The European academies of the 16th century formally solidified the gap between the fine and the applied arts, which exists in varying degrees to this day. Generally speaking, the applied arts apply design and aesthetics to objects of everyday use, while the fine arts serve as intellectual stimulation.

Currently, the term “artist” typically refers to anyone who is engaged in an activity that is deemed to be an art form. However, the questions of what is art and who is an artist are not easily answered. The idea of defining art today is far more difficult than it has ever been. After the exhibition during the Pop Art movement of Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Box* and *Campbell’s Soup Cans*, the questions of “what is art?” and “who is an artist?” entered a more conceptual realm. Anything can, in fact, be art, and the term remains constantly evolving.

Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962: Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* have come to be representative of the Pop Art movement.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- CaravaggioEcceHomo. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CaravaggioEcceHomo.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ecce Homo (Caravaggio). **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecce_Homo_(Caravaggio). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Formal analysis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Formal_analysis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Formalism (art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Formalism_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bauhaus Chair Breuer. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bauhaus_Chair_Breuer.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Wassily Chair. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wassily_Chair. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art therapy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_therapy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aesthetic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aesthetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- human condition. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/human_condition. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Helen_Frankenthaler-1956.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/5/53/Helen_Frankenthaler-1956.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Applied arts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Applied_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fine art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- What Is Art?. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/What_Is_Art?. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mimesis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mimesis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Creaciou0301n_de_Adau0301m 2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sistine_Chapel#/media/File:Creaci%C3%B3n_de_Ad%C3%A1m.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Creation of Adam. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Creation_of_Adam. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Module 1: Introduction and Definitions. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-1.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- What Is Art?. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/What_Is_Art?. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art%23Value_judgment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aesthetics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- intuitive. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/intuitive. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aesthetics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/aesthetics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Campbells_Soup_Cans_MOMA.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Campbell's_Soup_Cans%23/media/File:Campbells_Soup_Cans_MOMA.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Muse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Muse_(disambiguation). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Campbell's Soup Cans. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Campbell's_Soup_Cans. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 1: Introduction and Definitions. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-1.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Artist. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Artist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pop art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fine arts. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fine_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 1.1: What is Art? is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.2: Visual Elements

Line

A line is defined as a mark that connects the space between two points, taking any form along the way.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast different uses of line in art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- *Actual lines* are lines that are physically present, existing as solid connections between one or more points.
- *Implied line* refers to the path that the viewer ‘s eye takes as it follows shapes, colors, and forms along any given path.
- S*traight* or *classic* lines provide stability and structure to a composition and can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal on a work’s surface.
- *Expressive lines* refer to curved marks that increase the sense of dynamism of a work of art.
- The *outline* or *contour* lines create a border or path around the edge of a shape, thereby outlining and defining it. “Cross contour lines” delineate differences in the features of a surface.
- *Hatch lines* are a series of short lines repeated in intervals, typically in a single direction, and are used to add shading and texture to surfaces, while *cross-hatch lines* provide additional texture and tone to the image surface and can be oriented in any direction.

Key Terms

- **texture**:The feel or shape of a surface or substance; the smoothness, roughness, softness, etc. of something.
- **cross-hatching**:A method of showing shading by means of multiple small lines that intersect.
- **line**:A path through two or more points.

The line is an essential element of art, defined as a mark that connects the space between two points, taking any form along the way. Lines are used most often to define shape in two-dimensional works and could be called the most ancient, as well as the most universal, forms of mark making.

There are many different types of lines, all characterized by their lengths being greater than their width, as well as by the paths that they take. Depending on how they are used, lines help to determine the motion, direction, and energy of a work of art. The quality of a line refers to the character that is presented by a line in order to animate a surface to varying degrees.

Actual lines are lines that are physically present, existing as solid connections between one or more points, while *implied lines* refer to the path that the viewer’s eye takes as it follows shape, color, and form within an art work. *Implied lines* give works of art a sense of motion and keep the viewer engaged in a composition. We can see numerous implied lines in Jacques-Louis David’s *Oath of the Horatii*, connecting the figures and actions of the piece by leading the eye of the viewer through the unfolding drama.

Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784: Many implied lines connect the figures and action of the piece by leading the eye of the viewer through the unfolding drama.

Straight or *classic* lines add stability and structure to a composition and can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal on the surface of the work. *Expressive lines* refer to curved marks that increase the sense of dynamism of a work of art. These types of lines often follow an undetermined path of sinuous curves. The *outline* or *contour* lines create a border or path around the edge of a shape, thereby outlining and defining it. *Cross contour lines* delineate differences in the features of a surface and can give the illusion of three dimensions or a sense of form or shading.

Hatch lines are a series of short lines repeated in intervals, typically in a single direction, and are used to add shading and texture to surfaces. *Cross-hatch lines* provide additional texture and tone to the image surface and can be oriented in any direction. Layers of cross-hatching can add rich texture and volume to image surfaces.

Light and Value

Value refers to the use of light and dark in art.

Learning Objectives

Explain the artistic use of light and dark (also known as “value”)

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In painting, value changes are achieved by adding black or white to a color.
- Value in art is also sometimes referred to as ” tint ” for light hues and “shade” for dark hues.
- Values near the lighter end of the spectrum are termed “high-keyed” while those on the darker end are called “low-keyed.”
- In two-dimensional art works, the use of value can help to give a shape the illusion of mass or volume .
- Chiaroscuro was a common technique in Baroque painting and refers to clear tonal contrasts exemplified by very high-keyed whites, placed directly against very low-keyed darks.

Key Terms

- **chiaroscuro**:An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

The use of light and dark in art is called value. Value can be subdivided into tint (light hues) and shade (dark hues). In painting, which uses subtractive color, value changes are achieved by adding black or white to a color. Artists may also employ shading, which refers to a more subtle manipulation of value. The value scale is used to show the standard variations in tones . Values near the lighter end of the spectrum are termed high-keyed, while those on the darker end are low-keyed.

Value scale: The value scale represents different degrees of light used in artwork.

In two-dimensional artworks, the use of value can help to give a shape the illusion of mass or volume. It will also give the entire composition a sense of lighting. High contrast refers to the placing of lighter areas directly against much darker ones, so their difference is showcased, creating a dramatic effect. High contrast also refers to the presence of more blacks than white or grey. Low-contrast images result from placing mid-range values together so there is not much visible difference between them, creating a more subtle mood.

In Baroque painting, the technique of chiaroscuro was used to produce highly dramatic effects in art. Chiaroscuro, which means literally “light-dark” in Italian, refers to clear tonal contrasts exemplified by very high-keyed whites, placed directly against very low-keyed darks. Candlelit scenes were common in Baroque painting as they effectively produced this dramatic type of effect. Caravaggio used a high contrast palette in such works as *The Denial of St. Peter* to create his expressive chiaroscuro scene.

Caravaggio, *The Denial of St. Peter*, 1610: Caravaggio’s *The Denial of St. Peter* is an excellent example of how light can be manipulated in artwork.

Color

In the visual arts, color theory is a body of practical guidance to color mixing and the visual impacts of specific color combinations.

Learning Objectives

Express the most important elements of color theory and artists’ use of color

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Color theory first appeared in the 17th century, when Isaac Newton discovered that white light could be passed through a prism and divided into the full spectrum of colors.
- The spectrum of colors contained in white light are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo , and violet.
- Color theory divides color into the ” primary colors ” of red, yellow, and blue, which cannot be mixed from other pigments, and the “secondary colors” of green, orange, and violet, which result from different combinations of the primary colors.
- Primary and secondary colors are combined in various mixtures to create tertiary colors.
- Complementary colors are found opposite each other on the color wheel and represent the strongest contrast for those particular two colors.

Key Terms

- **complementary color**:A color which is regarded as the opposite of another on the color wheel (i.e., red and green, yellow and purple, and orange and blue).
- **value**:The relative darkness or lightness of a color in a specific area of a painting or other visual art.
- **primary color**:Any of three colors which, when added to or subtracted from others in different amounts, can generate all other colors.
- **tint**:A color considered with reference to other very similar colors. Red and blue are different colors, but two shades of scarlet are different tints.
- **gradation**:A passing by small degrees from one tone or shade, as of color, to another.
- **hue**:A color, or shade of color.

Color is a fundamental artistic element which refers to the use of hue in art and design. It is the most complex of the elements because of the wide array of combinations inherent to it. Color theory first appeared in the 17th century when Isaac Newton discovered that white light could be passed through a prism and divided into the full spectrum of colors. The spectrum of colors contained in white light are, in order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

Color theory subdivides color into the “primary colors” of red, yellow, and blue, which cannot be mixed from other pigments; and the “secondary colors” of green, orange and violet, which result from different combinations of the primary colors. Primary and secondary colors are combined in various mixtures to create “tertiary colors.” Color theory is centered around the color wheel, a diagram that shows the relationship of the various colors to each other .

Color wheel: The color wheel is a diagram that shows the relationship of the various colors to each other.

Color ” value ” refers to the relative lightness or darkness of a color. In addition, “tint” and “shade” are important aspects of color theory and result from lighter and darker variations in value, respectively. “Tone” refers to the gradation or subtle changes of a color on a lighter or darker scale. “Saturation” refers to the intensity of a color.

Additive and Subtractive Color

Additive color is color created by mixing red, green, and blue lights. Television screens, for example, use additive color as they are made up of the primary colors of red, blue and green (RGB). Subtractive color, or “process color,” works as the reverse of additive color and the primary colors become cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK). Common applications of subtractive color can be found in printing and photography.

Complementary Color

Complementary colors can be found directly opposite each other on the color wheel (purple and yellow, green and red, orange and blue). When placed next to each other, these pairs create the strongest contrast for those particular two colors.

Warm and Cool Color

The distinction between warm and cool colors has been important since at least the late 18th century. The contrast, as traced by etymologies in the Oxford English Dictionary, seems related to the observed contrast in landscape light, between the “warm” colors associated with daylight or sunset and the “cool” colors associated with a gray or overcast day. Warm colors are the hues from red through yellow, browns and tans included. Cool colors, on the other hand, are the hues from blue green through blue violet, with

most grays included. Color theory has described perceptual and psychological effects to this contrast. Warm colors are said to advance or appear more active in a painting, while cool colors tend to recede. Used in interior design or fashion, warm colors are said to arouse or stimulate the viewer , while cool colors calm and relax.

Texture

Texture refers to the tactile quality of the surface of an art object.

Learning Objectives

Recognize the use of texture in art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Visual texture refers to an implied sense of texture that the artist creates through the use of various artistic elements such as line , shading, and color.
- Actual texture refers to the physical rendering or the real surface qualities we can notice by touching an object.
- Visible brushstrokes and different amounts of paint will create a physical texture that can add to the expressiveness of a painting and draw attention to specific areas within it.
- It is possible for an artwork to contain numerous visual textures but still remain smooth to the touch.

Key Terms

- **tactile**:Tangible; perceptible to the sense of touch.

Texture

Texture in art stimulates the senses of sight and touch and refers to the tactile quality of the surface of the art. It is based on the perceived texture of the canvas or surface, which includes the application of the paint. In the context of artwork, there are two types of texture: visual and actual. Visual texture refers to an implied sense of texture that the artist creates through the use of various artistic elements such as line, shading and color. Actual texture refers to the physical rendering or the real surface qualities we can notice by touching an object, such as paint application or three-dimensional art.

It is possible for an artwork to contain numerous visual textures, yet still remain smooth to the touch. Take for example Realist or Illusionist works, which rely on the heavy use of paint and varnish, yet maintain an utterly smooth surface. In Jan Van Eyck's painting "The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin" we can notice a great deal of texture in the clothing and robes especially, while the surface of the work remains very smooth .

Jan van Eyck, *The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin*, 1435: *The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin* has a great deal of texture in the clothing and robes, but the actual surface of the work is very smooth.

Paintings often use actual texture as well, which we can observe in the physical application of paint. Visible brushstrokes and different amounts of paint will create a texture that adds to the expressiveness of a painting and draw attention to specific areas within it. The artist Vincent van Gogh is known to have used a great deal of actual texture in his paintings, noticeable in the thick application of paint in such paintings as *Starry Night*.

Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889: *The Starry Night* contains a great deal of actual texture through the thick application of paint.

Shape and Volume

Shape refers to an area in a two-dimensional space that is defined by edges; volume is three-dimensional, exhibiting height, width, and depth.

Learning Objectives

Define shape and volume and identify ways they are represented in art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- “Positive space ” refers to the space of the defined shape or figure.
- “Negative space” refers to the space that exists around and between one or more shapes.
- A ” plane ” in art refers to any surface area within space.
- ” Form ” is a concept that is related to shape and can be created by combining two or more shapes, resulting in a three-dimensional shape.
- Art makes use of both actual and implied volume .
- Shape, volume, and space, whether actual or implied, are the basis of the perception of reality.

Key Terms

- **form**:The shape or visible structure of an artistic expression.
- **volume**:A unit of three-dimensional measure of space that comprises a length, a width, and a height.
- **plane**:A flat surface extending infinitely in all directions (e.g., horizontal or vertical plane).

Shape refers to an area in two-dimensional space that is defined by edges. Shapes are, by definition, always flat in nature and can be geometric (e.g., a circle, square, or pyramid) or organic (e.g., a leaf or a chair). Shapes can be created by placing two different textures , or shape-groups, next to each other, thereby creating an enclosed area, such as a painting of an object floating in water.

“Positive space” refers to the space of the defined shape, or figure. Typically, the positive space is the subject of an artwork. “Negative space” refers to the space that exists around and between one or more shapes. Positive and negative space can become difficult to distinguish from each other in more abstract works.

A “plane” refers to any surface area within space. In two-dimensional art, the ” picture plane ” is the flat surface that the image is created upon, such as paper, canvas, or wood. Three-dimensional figures may be depicted on the flat picture plane through the use of the artistic elements to imply depth and volume, as seen in the painting *Small Bouquet of Flowers in a Ceramic Vase* by Jan Brueghel the Elder.

Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Small Bouquet of Flowers in a Ceramic Vase*, 1599: Three-dimensional figures may be depicted on the flat picture plane through the use of the artistic elements to imply depth and volume.

"Form" is a concept that is related to shape. Combining two or more shapes can create a three-dimensional shape. Form is always considered three-dimensional as it exhibits volume—or height, width, and depth. Art makes use of both actual and implied volume.

While three-dimensional forms, such as sculpture, have volume inherently, volume can also be simulated, or implied, in a two-dimensional work such as a painting. Shape, volume, and space—whether actual or implied—are the basis of the perception of reality.

Time and Motion

Motion, a principle of art, is a tool artists use to organize the artistic elements in a work; it is employed in both static and time-based mediums.

Learning Objectives

Name some techniques and mediums used by artists to convey motion in both static and time-based art forms

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Techniques such as scale and proportion are used to create the feeling of motion or the passing of time in static a visual piece.
- The placement of a repeated element in different area within an artwork is another way to imply motion and the passing of time.
- Visual experiments in time and motion were first produced in the mid-19th century, and the photographer Eadweard Muybridge is well-known for his sequential shots.
- The time-based mediums of film, video, kinetic sculpture , and performance art employ time and motion by their very definitions.

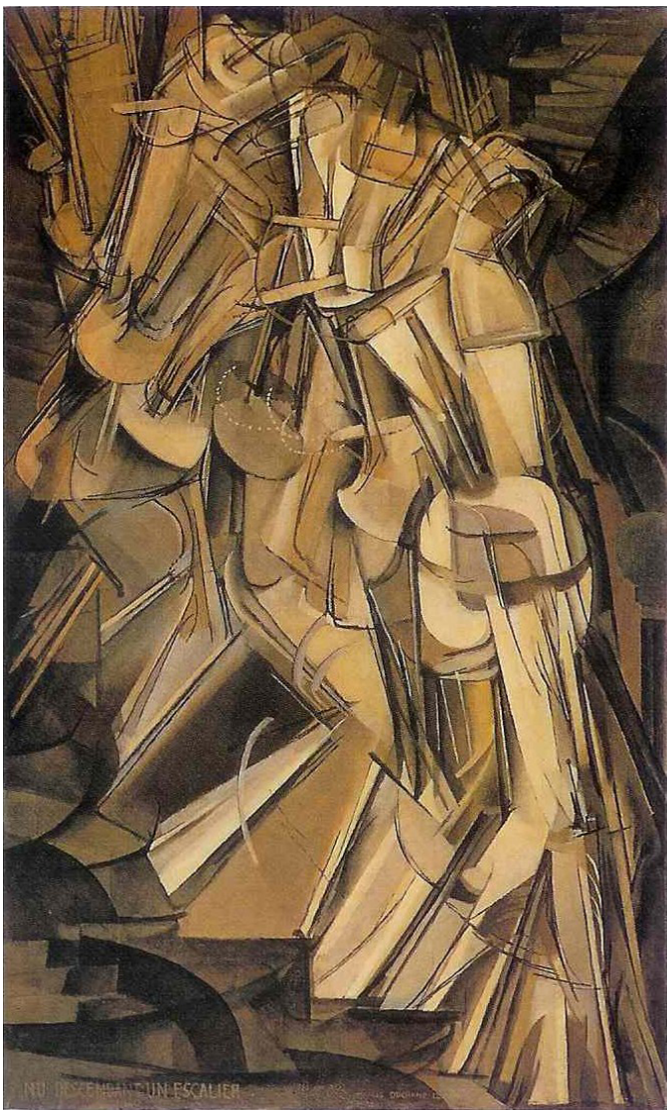
Key Terms

- **frames per second**:The number of times an imaging device produces unique consecutive images (frames) in one second. Abbreviation: FPS.
- **static**:Fixed in place; having no motion.

Motion, or movement, is considered to be one of the “principles of art”; that is, one of the tools artists use to organize the artistic elements in a work of art. Motion is employed in both static and in time-based mediums and can show a direct action or the intended path for the viewer ‘s eye to follow through a piece.

Techniques such as scale and proportion are used to create the feeling of motion or the passing of time in static visual artwork. For example, on a flat picture plane , an image that is smaller and lighter colored than its surroundings will appear to be in the background. Another technique for implying motion and/or time is the placement of a repeated element in different areas within an artwork.

Visual experiments in time and motion were first produced in the mid-19th century. The photographer Eadweard Muybridge is well known for his sequential shots of humans and animals walking, running, and jumping, which he displayed together to illustrate the motion of his subjects. Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* exemplifies an absolute feeling of motion from the upper left to lower right corner of the piece.



Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912: This work represents Duchamp’s conception of motion and time.

While static art forms have the ability to imply or suggest time and motion, the time-based mediums of film, video, kinetic sculpture, and performance art demonstrate time and motion by their very definitions. Film is many static images that are quickly passed through a lens. Video is essentially the same process, but digitally-based and with fewer frames per second . Performance art takes place in real time and makes use of real people and objects, much like theater. Kinetic art is art that moves, or depends on movement, for its effect. All of these mediums use time and motion as a key aspect of their forms of expression.

Chance, Improvisation, and Spontaneity

Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Fluxus movement all relied on the elements of chance, improvisation, and spontaneity as tools for making art works.

Learning Objectives

Describe how Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Fluxus movement relied on chance, improvisation, and spontaneity

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Dadaists are known for their “automatic writing” or stream of consciousness writing, which highlights the creativity of the unconscious mind.
- Surrealist works, much like Dadaist works, often feature an element of surprise, unexpected juxtaposition , and tapping into the unconscious mind.
- Surrealists are known for having invented ” exquisite corpse” drawing.
- The Fluxus movement was known for its ” happenings ,” which were performance events or situations that could take place anywhere, in any form , and relied heavily on chance, improvisation, and audience participation.

Key Terms

- **happening**:A spontaneous or improvised event, especially one that involves audience participation.
- **assemblage**:A collection of things which have been gathered together..

Chance, improvisation, and spontaneity are elements that can be used to create art, or they can be the very purpose of the artwork itself. Any medium can employ these elements at any point within the artistic process.

Marcel Duchamp, *Urinal*, 1917: Marcel Duchamp’s *Urinal* is an example of a “ready-made,” which were objects that were purchased or found and then declared art.

Dadaism

Dadaism was an art movement popular in Europe in the early 20th century. It was started by artists and poets in Zurich, Switzerland with strong anti-war and left-leaning sentiments. The movement rejected logic and reason and instead prized irrationality, nonsense, and intuition. Marcel Duchamp was a dominant member of the Dadaist movement, known for exhibiting “ready-mades,” which were objects that were purchased or found and then declared art.

Dadaists used what was readily available to create what was termed an “assemblage,” using items such as photographs, trash, stickers, bus passes, and notes. The work of the Dadaists involved chance, improvisation, and spontaneity to create art. They are known for using “automatic writing” or stream of consciousness writing, which often took nonsensical forms, but allowed for the opportunity of potentially surprising juxtapositions and unconscious creativity.

Surrealism

The Surrealist movement, which developed out of Dadaism primarily as a political movement, featured an element of surprise, unexpected juxtaposition and the tapping of the unconscious mind. Andre Breton, an important member of the movement, wrote the Surrealist manifesto, defining it as follows:

“Surrealism, n. Pure psychic automatism , by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought. Dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation. “

Like Dadaism before it, the Surrealist movement stressed the unimportance of reason and planning and instead relied heavily upon chance and surprise as a tool to harness the creativity of the unconscious mind. Surrealists are known for having invented “exquisite corpse” drawing, an exercise where words and images are collaboratively assembled, one after another. Many Surrealist techniques, including exquisite corpse drawing, allowed for the playful creation of art through assigning value to spontaneous production.

The Fluxus movement

The Fluxus movement of the 1960s was highly influenced by Dadaism. Fluxus was an international network of artists that skillfully blended together many different disciplines, and whose work was characterized by the use of an extreme do-it-yourself (DIY) aesthetic and heavily intermedia artworks. In addition, Fluxus was known for its “happenings,” which were multi-disciplinary performance events or situations that could take place anywhere. Audience participation was essential in a happening, and therefore relied on a great deal of surprise and improvisation. Key elements of happenings were often planned, but artists left room for improvisation, which eliminated the boundary between the artwork and the viewer , thus making the audience an important part of the art.

Inclusion of All Five Senses

The inclusion of the five human senses in a single work takes place most often in installation and performance art.

Learning Objectives

Explain how installation and performance art include the five senses of the viewer

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In contemporary art, it is quite common for work to cater to the senses of sight, touch, and hearing, while it is somewhat less common to address smell and taste.
- “Gesamtkunstwerk,” or “total work of art,” is a German word that refers to an artwork that attempts to address all five human senses.
- Installation art is a genre of three-dimensional artwork that is designed to transform the viewer ‘s perception of a space .
- Virtual reality is a term that refers to computer-simulated environments.

Key Terms

- **happening**:A spontaneous or improvised event, especially one that involves audience participation.
- **virtual reality**:A reality based in the computer.

The inclusion of the five human senses in a single work takes place most often in installation and performance-based art. In addition, works that strive to include all senses at once generally make use of some form of interactivity, as the sense of taste clearly must involve the participation of the viewer. Historically, this attention to all senses was reserved to ritual and ceremony . In contemporary art, it is quite common for work to cater to the senses of sight, touch, and hearing, while somewhat less common for art to address the senses of smell and taste.

The German word "Gesamtkunstwerk," meaning "total work of art," refers to a genre of artwork that attempts to address all five human senses. The concept was brought to prominence by the German opera composer Richard Wagner in 1849. Wagner staged an opera that sought to unite the art forms, which he felt had become overly disparate. Wagner's operas paid great attention to every detail in order to achieve a state of total artistic immersion. "Gesamkunstwerk" is now an accepted English term relating to aesthetics , but has evolved from Wagner's definition to mean the inclusion of the five senses in art.

Installation art is a genre of three-dimensional artwork that is designed to transform the viewer's perception of a space. *Embankment* by Rachel Whiteread exemplifies this type of transformation. The term generally pertains to an interior space, while Land Art typically refers to an outdoor space, though there is some overlap between these terms. The Fluxus movement of the 1960s is key to the development of installation and performance art as mediums.

Rachel Whiteread, *Embankment*, 2005: Whiteread's installation *Embankment* is a type of art designed to transform the viewer's perception of space.

"Virtual reality" is a term that refers to computer-simulated environments. Currently, most virtual reality environments are visual experiences, but some simulations include additional sensory information. Immersive virtual reality has developed in recent years with the improvement of technology and is increasingly addressing the five senses within a virtual realm. Artists have been exploring the possibilities of these simulated and virtual realities with the expansion of the discipline of cyberarts, though what constitutes cyberart continues to be up for debate. Environments such as the virtual world of Second Life are generally accepted, but whether or not video games should be considered art remains undecided.

Compositional Balance

Compositional balance refers to the placement of the artistic elements in relation to each other within a work of art.

Learning Objectives

Categorize the elements of compositional balance in a work of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

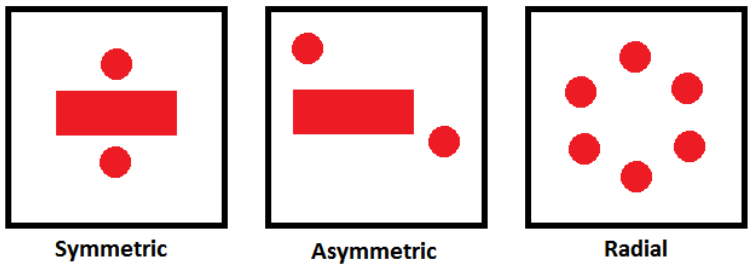
- A harmonious compositional balance involves arranging elements so that no one part of a work overpowers or seems heavier than any other part.
- The three most common types of compositional balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial .
- When balanced, a composition appears stable and visually right. Just as symmetry relates to aesthetic preference and reflects an intuitive sense for how things “should” appear, the overall balance of a given composition contributes to outside judgments of the work.

Key Terms

- **radial**:Arranged like rays that radiate from, or converge to, a common center.
- **symmetry**:Exact correspondence on either side of a dividing line, plane, center, or axis. The satisfying arrangement of a balanced distribution of the elements of a whole.
- **asymmetry**:Want of symmetry, or proportion between the parts of a thing, especially want of bilateral symmetry. Lacking a common measure between two objects or quantities; Incommensurability. That which causes something to not be symmetrical.

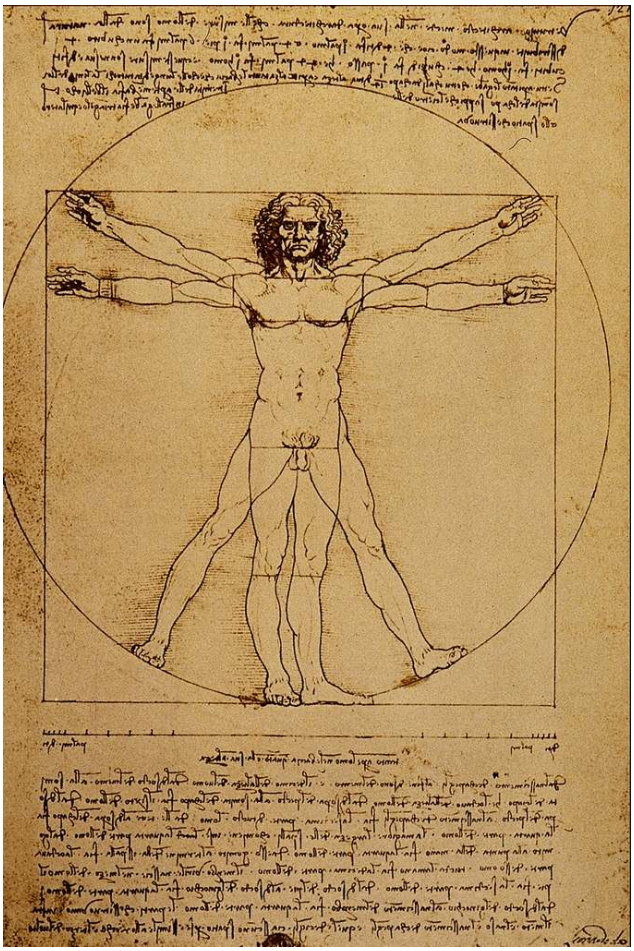
Compositional balance refers to the placement of the elements of art (color, form , line , shape, space , texture , and value) in relation to each other. When balanced, a composition appears more stable and visually pleasing. Just as symmetry relates to aesthetic preference and reflects an intuitive sense for how things “should” appear, the overall balance of a given composition contributes to outside judgments of the work.

Creating a harmonious compositional balance involves arranging elements so that no single part of a work overpowers or seems heavier than any other part. The three most common types of compositional balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.



Compositional balance: The three common types of balance are symmetric, asymmetric, and radial.

Symmetrical balance is the most stable, in a visual sense, and generally conveys a sense of harmonious or aesthetically pleasing proportionality. When both sides of an artwork on either side of the horizontal or vertical axis of the picture plane are the same in terms of the sense that is created by the arrangement of the elements of art, the work is said to exhibit this type of balance. The opposite of symmetry is asymmetry .



Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, 1487: Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* is often used as a representation of symmetry in the human body and, by extension, the natural universe.

Asymmetry is defined as the absence of, or a violation of, the principles of symmetry. Examples of asymmetry appear commonly in architecture. Although pre-modern architectural styles tended to place an emphasis on symmetry (except where extreme site conditions or historical developments lead away from this classical ideal), modern and postmodern architects frequently used asymmetry as a design element. For instance, while most bridges employ a symmetrical form due to intrinsic simplicities of design, analysis, fabrication, and economical use of materials, a number of modern bridges have deliberately departed from this, either in response to site-specific considerations or to create a dramatic design statement. .

Oakland Bay Bridge: Eastern span replacement of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge reflects asymmetrical architectural design.

Radial balance refers to circular elements in compositions. In classical geometry, a radius of a circle or sphere is any line segment from its center to its perimeter. By extension, the radius of a circle or sphere is the length of any such segment, which is half the diameter. The radius may be more than half the diameter, which is usually defined as the maximum distance between any two points of the figure. The inradius of a geometric figure is usually the radius of the largest circle or sphere contained in it. The inner

radius of a ring, tube or other hollow object is the radius of its cavity. The name “radial” or “radius” comes from Latin *radius*, meaning “ray” but also the spoke of a circular chariot wheel.

Rhythm

Artists use rhythm as a tool to guide the eye of the viewer through works of art.

Learning Objectives

Recognize and interpret the use of rhythm in a work of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rhythm may be generally defined as a “movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions” (Anon. 1971).
- Rhythm may also refer to visual presentation as “timed movement through space ” (Jirousek 1995), and a common language of pattern unites rhythm with geometry.
- For instance, placing a red spiral at the bottom left and top right, for example, will cause the eye to move from one spiral, to the other, and everything in between. It is indicating movement in the piece by the repetition of elements and, therefore, can make artwork seem active.

Key Terms

- **symmetry**:Exact correspondence on either side of a dividing line, plane, center or axis. The satisfying arrangement of a balanced distribution of the elements of a whole.

The principles of visual art are the rules, tools, and guidelines that artists use to organize the elements of in a piece of artwork. When the principles and elements are successfully combined, they aid in creating an aesthetically pleasing or interesting work of art. While there is some variation among them, movement, unity, harmony, variety, balance, rhythm, emphasis, contrast , proportion, and pattern are commonly sited as principles of art.

Rhythm (from Greek *rhythmos*, “any regular recurring motion, symmetry ” (Liddell and Scott 1996)) may be generally defined as a “movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions” (Anon. 1971). This general meaning of regular recurrence or pattern in time may be applied to a wide variety of cyclical natural phenomena having a periodicity or frequency of anything from microseconds to millions of years. In the performing arts, rhythm is the timing of events on a human scale, of musical sounds and silences, of the steps of a dance, or the meter of spoken language and poetry. Rhythm may also refer to visual presentation, as “timed movement through space” (Jirousek 1995), and a common language of pattern unites rhythm with geometry.

In a visual composition , pattern and rhythm are generally expressed by showing consistency with colors or lines . For instance, placing a red spiral at the bottom left and top right, for example, will cause the eye to move from one spiral, to the other, and then to the space in between. The repetition of elements creates movement of the viewer ‘s eye and can, therefore, make the artwork feel active. Hilma af Klint’s *Svanen (The Swan)* exemplifies the visual representation of rhythm using color and symmetry.

Hilma af Klint, *Svanen (The Swan)*, 1914: Color and symmetry work together in this painting to guide the eye of the viewer in a particular visual rhythm.

Proportion and Scale

Proportion is a measurement of the size and quantity of elements within a composition.

Learning Objectives

Apply the concept of proportion to different works of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hierarchical proportion is a technique used in art, mostly in sculpture and painting, in which the artist uses unnatural proportion or scale to depict the relative importance of the figures in the artwork.
- Mathematically, proportion is the relation between elements and a whole. In architecture, the whole is not just a building but the set and setting of the site.
- Among the various ancient artistic traditions, the harmonic proportions, human proportions, cosmic orientations, various aspects of sacred geometry , and small whole-number ratios were all applied as part of the practice of architectural design.

Key Terms

- **golden ratio**:The irrational number (approximately 1·618), usually denoted by the Greek letter φ (phi), which is equal to the sum of its own reciprocal and 1, or, equivalently, is such that the ratio of 1 to the number is equal to the ratio of its reciprocal to 1. Some twentieth-century artists and architects have proportioned their works to approximate this—especially in the form of the golden rectangle, in which the ratio of the longer side to the shorter equals this number—believing this proportion to be aesthetically pleasing.

Proportion is a measurement of the size and quantity of elements within a composition . Hierarchical proportion is a technique used in art, mostly in sculpture and painting, in which the artist uses unnatural proportion or scale to depict the relative importance of the figures in the artwork. In ancient Egyptian art, for example, gods and important political figures appear much larger than common people. Beginning with the Renaissance , artists recognized the connection between proportion and perspective , and the illusion of three-dimensional space . Images of the human body in exaggerated proportion were used to depict the reality an artist interpreted.

Depiction of Narmer from the Narmer Palette: Narmer, a Predynastic ruler, accompanied by men carrying the standards of various local gods. This piece demonstrates the ancient Egyptians' use of proportion, with Narmer appearing larger than the other figures depicted.

Mathematically, proportion is the relation between elements and a whole. In architecture, the whole is not just a building but the set and setting of the site. The things that make a building and its site "well shaped" include everything from the orientation of the site and the buildings on it, to the features of the grounds on which it is situated. Light, shade, wind, elevation , and choice of materials all relate to a standard of architectural proportion.

Architecture has often used proportional systems to generate or constrain the forms considered suitable for inclusion in a building. In almost every building tradition, there is a system of mathematical relations which governs the relationships between aspects of the design. These systems of proportion are often quite simple: whole number ratios or incommensurable ratios (such as the golden ratio) were determined using geometrical methods. Generally, the goal of a proportional system is to produce a sense of coherence and harmony among the elements of a building.

Among the various ancient artistic traditions, the harmonic proportions, human proportions, cosmic orientations, various aspects of sacred geometry, and small whole-number ratios were all applied as part of the practice of architectural design. For instance, the Greek classical architectural orders are all proportioned rather than dimensioned or measured modules, because the earliest modules were not based on body parts and their spans (fingers, palms, hands, and feet), but rather on column diameters and the widths of arcades and fenestrations .

Temple of Portanus: The Greek Temple of Portanus is an example of classical Greek architecture with its tetrastyle portico of four Ionic columns.

Typically, one set of column diameter modules used for casework and architectural moldings by the Egyptians and Romans is based on the proportions of the palm and the finger, while another less delicate module—used for door and window trim, tile work, and roofing in Mesopotamia and Greece—was based on the proportions of the hand and the thumb.

Dating back to the Pythagoreans, there was an idea that proportions should be related to standards, and that the more general and formulaic the standards, the better. This concept—that there should be beauty and elegance evidenced by a skillful composition of well understood elements—underlies mathematics, art, and architecture. The classical standards are a series of paired opposites designed to expand the dimensional constraints of harmony and proportion.

Space

Space in art can be defined as the area that exists between two identifiable points.

Learning Objectives

Define space in art and list ways it is employed by artists

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The organization of space is referred to as composition and is an essential component to any work of art.
- The space of an artwork includes the background, foreground, and middle ground , as well as the distance between, around, and within things.
- There are two types of space: positive space and negative space.
- After spending hundreds of years developing linear perspective , Western artistic notions about the accurate depiction of space went through a radical shift at the beginning of the 20th century.
- Cubism and subsequent modernist movements represented an important shift in the use of space within Western art, which is still being felt today.

Key Terms

- **space**:The distance or empty area between things.
- **Cubism**:An artistic movement in the early 20th century characterized by the depiction of natural forms as geometric structures of planes.

The organization of space in art is referred to as composition, and is an essential component of any work of art. Space can be generally defined as the area that exists between any two identifiable points.

Space is conceived of differently in each medium . The space in a painting, for example, includes the background, foreground and middle ground, while three-dimensional space, like sculpture or installation , will involve the distance between, around, and within points of the work. Space is further categorized as positive or negative. “Positive space” can be defined as the subject of an artwork, while “negative space” can be defined as the space around the subject.

Over the ages, space has been conceived of in various ways. Artists have devoted a great deal of time to experimenting with perspectives and degrees of flatness of the pictorial plane .

The perspective system has been a highly employed convention in Western art. Visually, it is an illusionist phenomenon, well suited to realism and the depiction of reality as it appears. After spending hundreds of years developing linear perspective, Western artistic conventions about the accurate depiction of space went through a radical shift at the beginning of the 20th century. The innovations of Cubism and subsequent modernist movements represented an important shift in the use of space within Western art, the impact of which is still being felt.

Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is an example of cubist art, which has a tendency to flatten the picture plane, and its use of abstract shapes and irregular forms suggest multiple points of view within a single image.

Two-Dimensional Space

Two-dimensional, or bi-dimensional, space is a geometric model of the planar projection of the physical universe in which we live.

Learning Objectives

Discuss two-dimensional space in art and the physical properties on which it is based

Key Takeaways

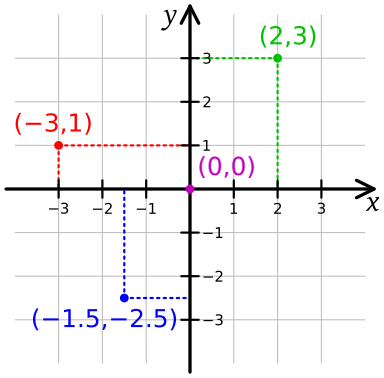
Key Points

- In physical terms, dimension refers to the constituent structure of all space and its position in time.
- Drawing is a form of visual art that makes use of any number of instruments to mark a two-dimensional medium .
- Almost any dimensional form can be represented by some combination of the cube, sphere, cylinder, and cone. Once these basic shapes have been assembled into a likeness, then the drawing can be refined into a more accurate and polished form.

Key Terms

- **dimension**:A single aspect of a given thing. A measure of spatial extent in a particular direction, such as height, width or breadth, or depth.
- **Two-Dimensional**:Existing in two dimensions. Not creating the illusion of depth.
- **Planar**:Of or pertaining to a plane. Flat, two-dimensional.

Two dimensional, or bi-dimensional, space is a geometric model of the planar projection of the physical universe in which we live. The two dimensions are commonly called length and width. Both directions lie on the same plane . In physics, our bi-dimensional space is viewed as a planar representation of the space in which we move.



Mathematical depiction of bi-dimensional space: Bi-dimensional Cartesian coordinate system.

In art composition , drawing is a form of visual art that makes use of any number of drawing instruments to mark a two-dimensional medium (meaning that the object does not have depth). One of the simplest and most efficient means of communicating visual ideas, the medium has been a popular and fundamental means of public expression throughout human history. Additionally, the relative availability of basic drawing instruments makes drawing more universal than most other media.

Measuring the dimensions of a subject while blocking in the drawing is an important step in producing a realistic rendition of a subject. Tools such as a compass can be used to measure the angles of different sides. These angles can be reproduced on the drawing surface and then rechecked to make sure they are accurate. Another form of measurement is to compare the relative sizes of different parts of the subject with each other. A finger placed at a point along the drawing implement can be used to compare that dimension with other parts of the image. A ruler can be used both as a straightedge and a device to compute proportions. When attempting to draw a complicated shape such as a human figure, it is helpful at first to represent the form with a set of primitive shapes.

Almost any dimensional form can be represented by some combination of the cube, sphere, cylinder, and cone. Once these basic shapes have been assembled into a likeness, then the drawing can be refined into a more accurate and polished form. The lines of the primitive shapes are removed and replaced by the final likeness. A more refined art of figure drawing relies upon the artist possessing a deep understanding of anatomy and the human proportions. A trained artist is familiar with the skeleton structure, joint location, muscle placement, tendon movement, and how the different parts work together during movement. This allows the artist to render more natural poses that do not appear artificially stiff. The artist is also familiar with how the proportions vary depending on the age of the subject, particularly when drawing a portrait.

Drawing human figures: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *Madame Palmyre with Her Dog*, 1897.

Linear Perspective and Three-Dimensional Space

Perspective is an approximate representation on a flat surface of an image as it is seen by the eye.

Learning Objectives

Explain perspective and its impact on art composition

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Systematic attempts to evolve a system of perspective are usually considered to have begun around the 5th century B.C. in the art of Ancient Greece.
- The earliest art paintings and drawings typically sized objects and characters hierarchically according to their spiritual or thematic importance, not their distance from the viewer .
- In Medieval Europe, the use and sophistication of attempts to convey distance increased steadily but without a basis in a systematic theory.
- By the Renaissance , nearly every artist in Italy used geometrical perspective in their paintings, both to portray depth and also as a new and "of the moment" compositional method.

Key Terms

- **curvilinear**:Having bends; curved; formed by curved lines.
- **horizon line**:A horizontal line in perspective drawing, directly opposite the viewer's eye and often implied, that represents objects infinitely far away and determines the angle or perspective from which the viewer sees the work.
- **vanishing point**:The point in a perspective drawing at which parallel lines receding from an observer seem to converge.

- **Perspective**:The technique of representing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface.

In art, perspective is an approximate representation on a flat surface of an image as it is seen by the eye, calculated by assuming a particular vanishing point . Systematic attempts to evolve a system of perspective are usually considered to have begun around the 5th century BCE in the art of Ancient Greece. By the later periods of antiquity , artists—especially those in less popular traditions—were well aware that distant objects could be shown smaller than those close at hand for increased illusionism. But whether this convention was actually used in a work depended on many factors. Some of the paintings found in the ruins of Pompeii show a remarkable realism and perspective for their time.

The earliest art paintings and drawings typically sized objects and characters hierarchically according to their spiritual or thematic importance, not their distance from the viewer. The most important figures are often shown as the highest in a composition , also from hieratic motives, leading to the “vertical perspective” common in the art of Ancient Egypt , where a group of “nearer” figures are shown below the larger figure(s).

The art of the Migration Period had no tradition of attempting compositions of large numbers of figures, and Early Medieval art was slow and inconsistent in relearning the convention from classical models, though the process can be seen underway in Carolingian art. European Medieval artists were aware of the general principle of varying the relative size of elements according to distance, and use and sophistication of attempts to convey distance increased steadily during the period, but without a basis in a systematic theory.

By the Renaissance, however, nearly every artist in Italy used geometrical perspective in their paintings. Not only was this use of perspective a way to portray depth, but it was also a new method of composing a painting. Paintings began to show a single, unified scene, rather than a combination of several. For a while, perspective remained the domain of Florence. Gradually, and partly through the movement of academies of the arts, the Italian techniques became part of the training of artists across Europe and, later, other parts of the world.

Perspective in Renaissance Painting: Pietro Perugino’s usage of perspective in this fresco at the Sistine Chapel (1481–82) helped bring the Renaissance to Rome.

A drawing has one-point perspective when it contains only one vanishing point on the horizon line . This type of perspective is typically used for images of roads, railway tracks, hallways, or buildings viewed so that the front is directly facing the viewer. Any objects that are made up of lines either directly parallel with the viewer’s line of sight or directly perpendicular (the railroad slats) can be represented with one-point perspective. These parallel lines converge at the vanishing point.

Two-point perspective can be used to draw the same objects as one-point perspective, but rotated—such as looking at the corner of a house, or looking at two forked roads shrink into the distance. In looking at a house from the corner, for example, one wall would recede towards one vanishing point and the other wall would recede towards the opposite vanishing point.

Three-point perspective is used for buildings depicted from above or below. In addition to the two vanishing points from before, one for each wall, there is now a third one for how those walls recede into the ground . This third vanishing point would be below the ground.

Four-point perspective is the curvilinear variant of two-point perspective. The resulting elongated frame can be used both horizontally and vertically. Like all other foreshortened variants of perspective, four-point perspective starts off with a horizon line, followed by four equally spaced vanishing points to delineate four vertical lines. Because vanishing points exist only when parallel lines are present in the scene, a perspective with no vanishing points ("zero-point") occurs if the viewer is observing a non-rectilinear scene. The most common example of a nonlinear scene is a natural scene (e.g., a mountain range), which frequently does not contain any parallel lines. A perspective without vanishing points can still create a sense of depth.

Distortions of Space and Foreshortening

Distortion is used to create various representations of space in two-dimensional works of art.

Learning Objectives

Identify how distortion is both employed and avoided in works of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Perspective projection distortion is the inevitable misrepresentation of three-dimensional space when drawn or "projected" onto a two-dimensional surface. It is impossible to accurately depict three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional plane .
- However, there are several constructs available which allow for seemingly accurate representation. Perspective projection can be used to mirror how the eye sees by the use of one or more vanishing points .
- Although distortion can be irregular or follow many patterns, the most commonly encountered distortions in composition , especially in photography, are radially symmetric, or approximately so, arising from the symmetry of a photographic lens.

Key Terms

- **radial**:Arranged like rays that radiate from, or converge into, a common center
- **projection**:The image that a translucent object casts onto another object.
- **foreshortening**:A technique for creating the appearance that the object of a drawing is extending into space by shortening the lines with which that object is drawn.

A distortion is the alteration of the original shape (or other characteristic) of an object, image, sound, or other form of information or representation. Distortion can be wanted or unwanted by the artist. Distortion is usually unwanted when it concerns physical degradation of a work. However, it is more commonly referred to in terms of perspective, where it is employed to create realistic representations of space in two-dimensional works of art.

Perspective Projection Distortion

Perspective projection distortion is the inevitable misrepresentation of three-dimensional space when drawn or "projected" onto a two-dimensional surface. It is impossible to accurately depict three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional plane. However, there are several constructs available that allow for seemingly accurate representation. The most common of these is perspective projection. Perspective projection can be used to mirror how the eye sees by making use of one or more vanishing points.

Giotto, *Lamentation (The Mourning of Christ)*, 1305–1306: Giotto is one of the most notable pre-Renaissance artists to recognize distortion on two-dimensional planes.

Foreshortening

Foreshortening is the visual effect or optical illusion that causes an object or distance to appear shorter than it actually is because it is angled toward the viewer . Although foreshortening is an important element in art where visual perspective is being depicted, foreshortening occurs in other types of two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional scenes, such as oblique parallel projection drawings.

The physiological basis of visual foreshortening was undefined until the year 1000 when the Arabian mathematician and philosopher, Alhazen, in his *Perspectiva*, first explained that light projects conically into the eye. A method for presenting foreshortened geometry systematically onto a plane surface was unknown for another 300 years. The artist Giotto may have been the first to recognize that the image beheld by the eye is distorted: to the eye, parallel lines appear to intersect (like the distant edges of a path or road), whereas in “undistorted” nature, they do not. In many of Giotto’s paintings, perspective is employed to achieve various distortion effects.

Foreshortening: This painting illustrates Melozzo da Forlì’s usage of upward foreshortening in his frescoes at The Basilica della Santa Casa.

Distortion in Photography

In photography, the projection mechanism is light reflected from an object. To execute a drawing using perspective projection, projectors emanate from all points of an object and intersect at a station point. These projectors intersect with an imaginary plane of projection and an image is created on the plane by the points of intersection. The resulting image on the projection plane reproduces the image of the object as it is beheld from the station point.

Radial distortion can usually be classified as one of two main types: barrel distortion and pincushion distortion. Barrel distortion occurs when image magnification decreases with distance from the optical axis. The apparent effect is that of an image which has been mapped around a sphere (or barrel). Fisheye lenses, which take hemispherical views, utilize this type of distortion as a way to map an infinitely wide object plane into a finite image area.

On the other hand, in pincushion distortion, the image magnification increases with the distance from the optical axis. The visible effect is that lines that do not go through the center of the image are bowed inwards, towards the center of the image, like a pincushion. A certain amount of pincushion distortion is often found with visual optical instruments (i.e., binoculars), where it serves to eliminate the globe effect.

Cylindrical perspective is a form of distortion caused by fisheye and panoramic lenses, which reproduce straight horizontal lines above and below the lens axis level as curved, while reproducing straight horizontal lines on lens axis level as straight. This is also a common feature of wide-angle anamorphic lenses of less than 40mm focal length in cinematography. Essentially it is just barrel distortion, but only in the horizontal plane. It is an artifact of the squeezing process that anamorphic lenses do to fit widescreen images onto standard-width film.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- David-Oath of the Horatii-1784. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:David-Oath_of_the_Horatii-1784.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oath of the Horatii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_the_Horatii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 3: The Visual Language: The Elements of Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-3.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Line art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Line_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Outline drawing. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_drawing. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- texture. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/texture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- line. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/line. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- cross-hatching. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cross-hatching. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caravaggio denial. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caravaggio_denial.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ART VALUE SCALE. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ART_VALUE_SCALE.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 3: The Visual Language: The Elements of Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-3.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- The Denial of Saint Peter (Caravaggio). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Denial_of_Saint_Peter_(Caravaggio). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lightness. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightness. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- BYR color wheel. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BYR_color_wheel.svg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Color wheel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/RYB_color_model. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 3: The Visual Language: The Elements of Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-3.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Theory of Colours. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_Colours. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/complementary-color. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- hue. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hue. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- gradation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gradation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- primary colour. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/primary_colour. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- value. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/value. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tint. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tint. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Van Gogh - Starry Night - Google Art Project. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Gogh_-_Starry_Night_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jan van Eyck 070. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_van_Eyck_070.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Madonna of Chancellor. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna_of_Chancellor_Rolin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Starry Night . **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Starry_Night. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pattern. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pattern%23Patterns_in_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 3: The Visual Language: The Elements of Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-3.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Texture (visual arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Texture_(visual_arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Texture (painting). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Texture_(painting). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tactile. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tactile. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jan Bruegel d.nu00c4.n007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Bruegel_d._%C3%84._007.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 3: The Visual Language: The Elements of Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-3.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- form. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/form. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- volume. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/volume. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- plane. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/plane. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Duchamp - Nude Descending a Staircase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_-_Nude_Descending_a_Staircase.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nude_Descending_a_Staircase,_No._2. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sequential art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sequential_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kinetic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinetic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Video art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 4: The Artistic Principles. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-4.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Sound art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Performance art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Performance_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- static. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/static. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- frames per second. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/frames_per_second. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Public art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New media art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_media_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Collaboration. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaboration%23Arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dada. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dada. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Interactive art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Interactive_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- happening. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/happening. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- assemblage. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/assemblage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Whiteread tate 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Whiteread_tate_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Installation art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Installation-art.pdf. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Immersion (virtual reality). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Immersion_(virtual_reality). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Simulated reality. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulated_reality. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Installation art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Installation_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- happening. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/happening. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- virtual reality. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/virtual_reality. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ProposedSFOBBEasternSpan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ProposedSFOBBEasternSpan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Artistic balance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Artistic_balance.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Studio del Corpo Umano - Leonardo da Vinci. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Studio_del_Corpo_Umano_-_Leonardo_da_Vinci.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vitruvian Man . **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitruvian_Man. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Radius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Radius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Principles of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Psychology of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology_of_art%23Compositional_balance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Asymmetry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Asymmetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Symmetrical. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Symmetrical. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- symmetry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/symmetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- asymmetry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/asymmetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- radial. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/radial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hilma_af_Klint_Svanen.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/0/07/Hilma_af_Klint_Svanen.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Principles of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_art%23Pattern.2FRhythm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rhythm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rhythm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhythm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Principles of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Composition (visual arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_(visual_arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- symmetry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/symmetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- TempleOfPortunus-ForumBoarium.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/b/b1/TempleOfPortunus-ForumBoarium.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Narmer-Tjet2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Narmer-Tjet2.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Principles of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_art%23Proportion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hierarchical proportion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierarchical_proportion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Proportion (architecture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportion_(architecture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fenestrations. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Fenestrations. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- golden ratio. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/golden_ratio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White space (visual arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/White_space_(visual_arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Composition (visual arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_(visual_arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elements of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Module 3: The Visual Language: The Elements of Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Module-3.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- representational. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/representational. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/space. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec - Madame Palmyre with Her Dog, 1897. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Henri_de_Toulouse-Lautrec_-_Madame_Palmyre_with_Her_Dog,_1897.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cartesian-coordinate-system. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cartesian-coordinate-system.svg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Dimension. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimension. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Drawing. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Two dimension. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_dimension. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- dimension. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dimension. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Two-Dimensional. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-Dimensional. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Planar. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Planar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Perugino Keys. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Perugino_Keys.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- vanishing point. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vanishing_point. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Linear perspective. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Linear_perspective. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- curvilinear. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/curvilinear. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Perspective. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Perspective. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Perspective drawing. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspective_drawing. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Foreshortening. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Foreshortening. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Loreto Fresko. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Loreto_Fresko.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Giotto - Scrovegni - -36- - Lamentation (The Mourning of Christ). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Giotto_-_Scrovegni_-_-36-_-_Lamentation_(The_Mourning_of_Christ).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- radial. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/radial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cylindrical perspective. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylindrical_perspective. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- foreshortening. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/foreshortening. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Perspective projection distortion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspective_projection_distortion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Distortion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Distortion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Distortion (optics). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Distortion_(optics). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Foreshortening. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Foreshortening. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Projection. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Projection. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 1.2: Visual Elements is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.3: Content

Types of Content

Content in art takes the form of portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, genre art, and narrative art.

Learning Objectives

Describe different categories of figurative or abstract art.

Key Takeaways

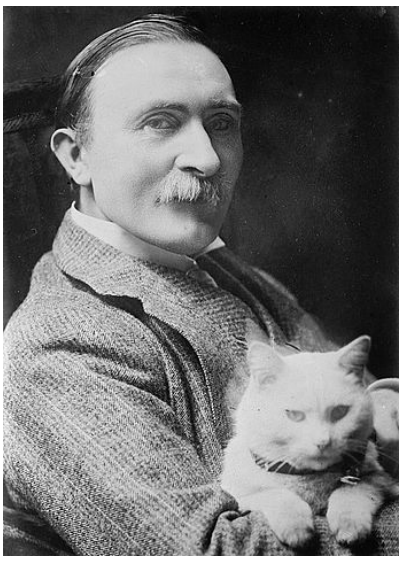
Key Points

- Content in a work of art refers to what is being depicted and might be helpful in deriving a basic meaning. It appears in the visual arts in several forms , all of which may be figurative (realistic) or abstract (distorted). Among them are portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, genre art, and narrative art.
- Portraits represents the likeness of a person and can include a study of the sitter's mood or personality.
- Landscapes depict natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests, especially where the main subject is a wide view.
- A still-life is a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, typically commonplace objects that may be either natural or man-made.
- Genre art involves the pictorial representation in any of various media of scenes or events from everyday life, whereas narrative art tells a story that may be real or imagined.

Content in a work of art refers to what is being depicted and might be helpful in deriving a basic meaning. Sometimes content is straightforward; in other cases, however, it is less obvious and requires additional information. Content appears in the visual arts in several forms, all of which may be figurative (realistic) or abstract (distorted). Among them are portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, genre art, and narrative art.

Portraits

A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression are predominant. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person. For this reason, in photography a portrait is generally not a snapshot, but a composed image of a person in a still position. A portrait often shows a person looking directly at the painter or photographer in order to most successfully engage the subject with the viewer .



Philip Burne–*Jones Holding a Cat* : George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Landscapes

Landscape painting, also known as landscape art, is the depiction in art of landscapes—natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests, especially where the main subject is a wide view—with its elements arranged into a coherent composition . In other works, landscape backgrounds for figures can still form an important part of the work. Sky is almost always included in the view, and weather is often an element of the composition. Detailed landscapes as a distinct subject are not found in all artistic traditions and develop when there is already a sophisticated tradition of representing other subjects.

Henri Matisse. *Landscape at Collioure* (1905): Oil on canvas. 38.8 x 46.6cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Matisse was a member of the Fauves (French for “wild beasts”), who used bold colors to convey emotions.

Still Lifes

A still life (plural still lifes) is a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, typically commonplace objects that may be either natural (food, flowers, dead animals, plants, rocks, or shells) or man-made (drinking glasses, books, vases, jewelry, coins, pipes, and so on). Early still-life paintings, particularly before 1700, often contained religious and allegorical symbolism relating to the objects depicted. Some modern still lifes break the two-dimensional barrier and employ three-dimensional mixed media, and use found objects, photography, computer graphics, as well as video and sound.

Maria van Oosterwijk. *Vanitas Still-Life* (1668): Oil on canvas. 73 x 88.5cm. Kunsthistorisches Musuem, Vienna.

Genre Art

Genre art is the pictorial representation in any of various media of scenes or events from everyday life, such as markets, domestic settings, interiors, parties, inn scenes, and street scenes. Such representations (also called genre works, genre scenes , or genre views) may be realistic, imagined, or romanticized by the artist.

Nicolaes Maes. *The Idle Servant (*1655): Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London. Dutch Baroque genre scenes often have important moral lessons as their subtexts.

Narrative Art

Narrative art is art that tells a story, either as a moment in an ongoing story or as a sequence of events unfolding over time. Some of the earliest evidence of human art suggests that people told stories with pictures. However, without some knowledge of the story being told, it is very hard to read ancient pictures because they are not organized in a systematic way like words on a page, but rather can unfold in many different directions at once.

Hagesandros, Athenedoros, and Polydoros. *Laocoön and His Sons* (First century BCE): Marble. Vatican Museum, Rome. This marble sculpture depicts a scene from Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*, in which the Trojan seer Laocoön foresees the Trojan Horse and the destruction of Troy by the Greeks. Before he can warn his fellow townspeople, the sea god Neptune (an ally of the Greeks) sends his serpents to kill Laocoön and his sons.

Figurative and Abstract Art

Art exists along a continuum from realistic representational work to fully non-representational work.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish between figurative and abstract art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Representational art, or figurative art, references objects or events in the real world.
- Romanticism , Impressionism , and Expressionism contributed to the emergence of abstract art in the nineteenth century.
- Even representational work is abstracted to some degree; entirely realistic art is elusive.

Key Terms

- **verisimilitude**:The property of seeming true, of resembling reality; resemblance to reality, realism.

Painting and sculpture can be divided into the categories of figurative (or representational) and abstract (or non-representational). Figurative art describes artwork – particularly paintings and sculptures – which are clearly derived from real object sources, and therefore are, by definition, representational. Since the arrival of abstract art in the early twentieth century, the term “figurative” has been used to refer to any form of modern art that retains strong references to the real world.

Johann Anton Eismann, *Ein Meerhafen*, 1600s: This figurative work from the 17th century depicts easily recognizable objects—ships, people, and buildings.

Artistic independence was advanced during the nineteenth century, resulting in the emergence of abstract art. Three movements which contributed heavily to the development of these styles were Romanticism, Impressionism, and Expressionism.

Abstraction indicates a departure from reality in its depiction of imagery . Abstraction exists along a continuum; it can formally refer to compositions that are derived (or abstracted) from figurative or other natural sources, or it can refer to non-representational art and non-objective art that has no derivation from figures or objects.

Even art that aims for verisimilitude of the highest degree can be said to be abstract, at least theoretically, since perfect representation is likely to be exceedingly elusive. Artwork which takes liberties, altering, for instance, color and form in ways that are conspicuous, can be said to be partially abstract.

Robert Delaunay, *Le Premier Disque*, 1912–1913: Delaunay's work is an example of early abstract art.

Non-representational art refers to total abstraction, bearing no trace of any reference to anything recognizable. In geometric abstraction, for instance, one is unlikely to find references to naturalistic entities. Figurative art and total abstraction are nearly mutually exclusive, but figurative or representational art often contains at least one element of abstraction.

Meaning in Nonrepresentational Art

Meaning in nonrepresentational art is highly subjective and can be difficult to define.

Learning Objectives

Relate the meaning of nonrepresentational art, its goals, and its specific expressions

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Nonrepresentational artwork refers to art that does not attempt to represent or reference reality.
- In the late 19th century, artists began to move toward increasing abstraction as a means of communicating subjective experience more personally and creatively.
- Artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian viewed art as an expression of spirituality.

Key Terms

- **expressionism**:A movement in the arts in which the artist does not depict objective reality, but rather the subjective expression of inner experience.
- **nonrepresentational**:Not intended to represent a physical object in reality.

Nonrepresentational art refers to compositions which do not rely on representation or mimesis to any extent. Abstract art , nonfigurative art, nonobjective art, and nonrepresentational art are related terms that indicate a departure from reality in the depiction of imagery in art. Meaning in nonrepresentational art is highly subjective and can be difficult to define. We can focus on the elements of the artwork (form, shape, line , color, space , and texture) in terms of the aesthetic value of the work, but the *meaning* will always be personal to the viewer unless the artist has made a statement about his or her intentions.

Generally, we can look at nonrepresentational art as the personal expression of an artist's subjective experience. Certain movements have described their intentions as an aim to evoke moods or emotions in the viewer. A good example are the expressionists of the early 20th century, who aimed to present the world solely from a subjective perspective , distorting it radically for emotional effect.

Nonrepresentational art has often been explored by artists as a means to spiritual expression. Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian painter, printmaker, and art theorist, is one of the most famous 20th century artists and is generally considered the first important painter of modern abstract art. As an early modernist in search of new modes of visual expression and spiritual expression, he theorized (as did contemporary occultists and theosophists) that pure visual abstraction had corollary vibrations with sound and music. He posited that pure abstraction could express pure spirituality.

Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition VII*, 1913: Kandinsky is recognized as the father of modern abstract art in the 20th century.

Piet Mondrian's art was also related to his spiritual and philosophical studies. In 1908 he became interested in the theosophical movement launched by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who believed that it was possible to attain a knowledge of nature more profound than that provided by empirical means, and much of Mondrian's work for the rest of his life was inspired by his search for that spiritual knowledge.

Iconography

Iconography is the scholarly study of the content of images, including identification, description, and interpretation.

Learning Objectives

Define iconography and interpret or perform an iconographical analysis of an image

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Academic studies of iconography in painting emerged in the 19th century in France and Germany.
- Iconographical scholarship became particularly prominent in art history after 1940.
- In the 20th century, studies of iconography have become of interest to a broad public beyond the scholarly community.

Key Terms

- **iconography**:The branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images.

Iconography is the branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images such as the subjects that are depicted, particulars of composition , and other elements that are distinct from artistic style .

Iconography as an academic art historical discipline developed in the nineteenth century in the works of scholars such as Adolphe Napoleon Didron (1806–1867), Anton Heinrich Springer (1825–1891), and Émile Mâle (1862–1954). Christian religious art was the main focus of study throughout this period, and French scholars were especially prominent. They looked back to earlier attempts to classify and organize subjects encyclopedically, as guides to understanding works of art, both religious and profane, in a more scientific manner than the popular aesthetic approach of the time. These early contributions paved the way for encyclopedias, manuals, and other publications useful in identifying the content of art.

In early twentieth-century Germany, Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and his followers Fritz Saxl (1890–1948) and Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) elaborated the practice of identification and classification of motifs in images to using iconography as a means of understanding meaning. Panofsky codified an influential approach to iconography in his 1939 *Studies in Iconology*, where he defined it as "the branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to form". The distinction he and other scholars drew between particular definitions of "iconography" (put simply, the identification of visual content) and "iconology" (the analysis of the meaning of that content) has not been generally accepted, though it is still used by some writers.

While most iconographical scholarship remains highly dense and specialized, some analyses began to attract a much wider audience; for example, Panofsky's theory (now generally out of favor with specialists) is that the writing on the rear wall in *The Arnolfini Portrait* by Jan van Eyck turned the painting into the record of a marriage contract. Holbein's *The Ambassadors* has been the subject of books for a general market with new theories as to its iconography; as well as being a double portrait, the painting contains a still life of several meticulously rendered objects, the meaning of which is the cause of much debate. The most notable and famous of Holbein's symbols in the work is the distorted skull which is placed in the bottom center of the composition. The skull, rendered in anamorphic perspective , another invention of the Early Renaissance , is speculated to have been a reminder of death and mortality.

Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434: The iconography in this work has historically been the subject of debate due to its many signifiers. Some scholars have theorized that the painting was actually a marriage contract due to the writing on the wall in the background.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Vanitas-Still_Life,_Oosterwijck.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vanitas-Still_Life,_Oosterwijck.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 364px-The_idle_servant.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/1TMtsK. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Matisse_Les_toits.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21463164%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- 499px-Laocoon_Pio-Clementino_Inv1059-1064-1067.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1302927%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 345px-Philip_Burne-Jones_holding_cat.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6517545. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Form and Content. **Provided by**: Saylor Academy. **Located at**: https://learn.saylor.org/mod/page/view.php?id=4034. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Portrait. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Landscape Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Form and Content. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_and_content. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Narrative Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Genre Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Still-Life. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Still_life. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Figurative art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Figurative_art. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Abstract art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_art. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Abstract art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Figurative art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Figurative_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abstract art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- verisimilitude. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/verisimilitude. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wassily Kandinsky. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wassily_Kandinsky. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Abstract art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Western painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_painting%23Pioneers_of_abstraction. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abstract art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- nonrepresentational. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nonrepresentational. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- expressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Erwin Panofsky. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Erwin_Panofsky. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Ambassadors (Holbein). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_(Holbein). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iconography. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 1.3: Content is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.4: Art in Society

Religion as a Theme

Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic artistic traditions have used elements of symbolism, narrative, ritual, iconoclasm, and authorship to express the tenets of their beliefs throughout history.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the history and elements of Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Christian sacred art is produced in an attempt to illustrate, supplement, and portray, in tangible form , the principles of Christianity; most Christian art is built around themes familiar to the intended observer.
- Buddhist art followed believers as the dharma spread and evolved in each new host country. It developed to the north through Central Asia and into Eastern Asia to form the Northern branch of Buddhist art; and to the east as far as Southeast Asia to form the Southern branch of Buddhist art.
- Islamic art prohibited the depiction of representational images in religious art . Therefore, the naturally decorative nature of Arabic script led to the use of calligraphic decorations, which usually involved repeating geometrical patterns that expressed ideals of order and nature.
- Religion and spirituality has been a theme in art throughout history and throughout many areas of the world, from Hinduism and Judaism to indigenous spiritual practices.

Key Terms

- **iconoclasm**:The deliberate destruction of religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.
- **religious art**:Artistic imagery using religious inspiration and motifs, often intended to uplift the mind to the spiritual.

Religious art is art that makes use of religious inspiration and/or motifs . It is often intended to uplift the mind to the spiritual or communicate the principles of the religion. While incredibly large and varied individually, we can identify certain elements that Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic artistic traditions have used to express the tenets of their beliefs using symbolism , ritual , iconoclasm , and authorship.

Christian Art

Christian art is typically produced in order to illustrate the various principles and narratives of the religion. Throughout time, most Christian sects have used art to some extent, though there have been definite periods of iconoclasm within the history of the religion. Most Christian art alludes to themes that are familiar to a practicing Christian, such as the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus or the crucifixion. While Christianity is a monotheistic religion, Christians believe God is triune, meaning that the three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are in one union in which each figure is also wholly God. Most Christian art focuses on Jesus, particularly at the Crucifixion or stories from the Bible, while the Holy Spirit is often depicted as a dove or tongue of fire. God as the Father of Jesus is rarely visually depicted.

Christianity has historically made use of an elaborate iconographic system, whereby each saint is associated with a particular object or animal. For example, Saint Peter is depicted with keys and Saint Patrick is depicted with a shamrock in order to quickly convey narratives to potentially illiterate audiences.

Virgin and Child. Wall painting from the early catacombs, Rome, 4th century.: One of the most common Christian themes is that of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus.

Buddhist Art

Buddhist art originated on the Indian subcontinent following the historical life of Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Gautama Buddha, in the sixth to fifth century BCE, evolving via contact with other cultures as it spread throughout Asia and the world. Buddhist art followed believers as the dharma spread, adapted, and evolved in each new host country. It developed to the north through Central Asia and into Eastern Asia to form the Northern branch of Buddhist art and to the east as far as Southeast Asia to form the Southern branch of Buddhist art. In India, Buddhist art flourished and even influenced the development of Hindu art, while Tibetan Buddhist art was created as a meditation practice. An important example of Tibetan meditation art is the sand mandala , made and used by monks for meditation.

Thematically, Buddhist art is typically comprised of devotional works depicting mythology and narratives associated with the Buddha and bodhisattvas . There is great variation in the types of Buddhist art as the religion is so vast. Some Buddhist art contains animist themes, meaning the depiction of natural elements (animals, nature, earth) as spiritual entities. The creation of art has traditionally been considered both a meditation itself, as well as a method to produce an object to aid others in meditation. Works are rarely, if ever, signed by the artist or group of artists, as the art-making process is considered sacred and communal.

Sand mandala: An example of Tibetan meditation art is the sand mandala, made by monks and used in meditation.

Islamic Art

Islamic art prohibits representational images in religious art, and evolved to be comprised mainly of calligraphic decorations and repetitive geometric patterns. Intended to express the ideals of order and of nature, these geometric patterns are used to adorn religious architecture, carpets, manuscripts, and other art objects. Sacred Islamic art reflects a worldview focused on spiritual essence as opposed to physical form.

Calligraphy is the most highly regarded and most fundamental element of Islamic art. The employment of calligraphy as ornament had a definite aesthetic appeal but often also included an underlying talismanic component. Geometric patterns make up one of the three non-figurative types of decoration in Islamic art, which also includes calligraphy and vegetal patterns. Abstract designs not only adorn the surfaces of monumental Islamic architecture but also function as the major decorative element on a vast array of objects of all types.

Islamic calligraphy: Eighteenth century writing in Ottoman calligraphy, depicting the phrase “In the name of God, Most Merciful, Most Gracious”.

The Market

The key components of the art market are the gallery, curator, dealer, consultant, and collector.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the roles of the gallery, curator, dealer, consultant, and collector in the art market

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The art market is an economic ecosystem that relies not only on supply and demand, but also on the fabrication of a work's predicted future monetary and/or cultural value .
- The primary art market refers to art that enters the market for the first time. The secondary market refers to artworks that have been sold at least once before.
- An art dealer is a person or company who buys and sells works of art.
- Art galleries are commercial or privately funded businesses that deal in artworks, typically made by contemporary artists.
- The curator is the manager or director of the gallery who traditionally programs the space and organizes art shows.
- Art fairs act as conventions or large-scale shows where galleries display the work of select artists whom they represent.

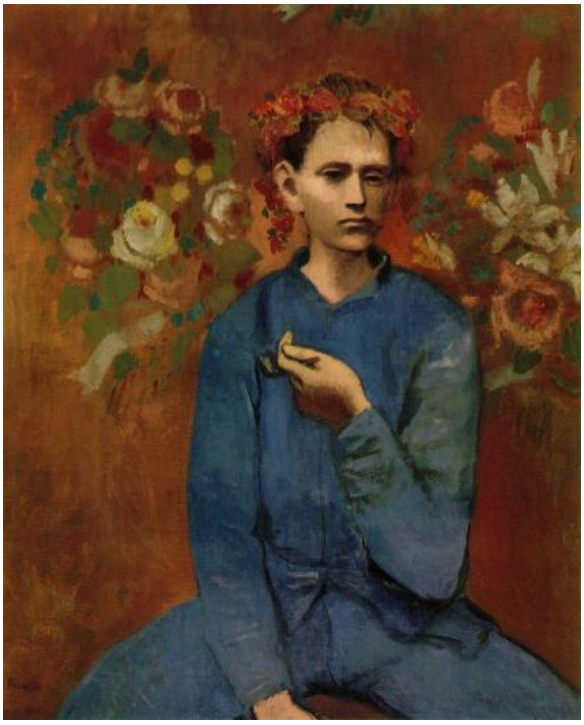
Key Terms

- **nonprofit**:An organization that exists for reasons other than to make a profit, such as a charitable, educational, or service organization.
- **curator**:A person who manages, administers, or organizes a collection, either independently or employed by a museum, library, archive, or zoo.

The art market is an economic ecosystem that relies not only on supply and demand, but on the fabrication of a work's predicted future monetary and/or cultural value. The art market can appear somewhat unclear, since artists do not make art with the sole intention of selling it, and buyers often have no idea of the value of their purchase.

The art market is made up of two parts: the primary market and the secondary market. The primary art market refers to art that enters the market for the first time, while the secondary market refers to artworks that have been sold at least once before.

Once a work is sold, it enters the secondary market and the price at which it sold has a direct influence on its subsequent price. For example, the Picasso painting *Garçon à la Pipe* sold for $104.2 million at auction, thereby setting its worth at $104.2 million. Supply and demand affects the secondary market more than the primary market, as contemporary art with no market history relies on speculative analysis to determine its value.



Picasso, *Garçon à la Pipe*, 1905: Picasso's "*Garçon à la Pipe* sold for, and is thereby valued at, $104.2 million.

The important players in the art market are the gallery, curator, dealer, consultant, and collector. Art galleries are commercial or privately funded businesses that deal in artworks, made by contemporary or historical artists. Nonprofit galleries are typically a step above commercial galleries, and include museums and galleries that are funded by the government or charity that do not sell artwork, such as the Tate Modern.

The curator is generally the manager of the gallery and the person who programs the space and organizes art shows. Curators at commercial galleries may have the responsibility of selling work, while those at museums generally maintain the organizational aspects of exhibitions.

Art dealers are persons or companies who buy and sell works of art. They typically seek out artists to represent while simultaneously building relationships with collectors and museums to whom they might be able to sell the work. Dealers are often able to anticipate market trends, and some prominent dealers might be able to influence the taste of the market. Many dealers specialize in a particular style , region, or time period and travel internationally to exhibitions, auctions, artists' studios, and art fairs to pick up new work. An example of a highly notable art dealer is Larry Gagosian, who also owns Gagosian Gallery, a highly influential art gallery.

Art fairs act as conventions or large-scale shows where galleries display the work of select artists whom they represent and are important to the structure of the contemporary art market. Prominent art fairs include Art Basel, Scope, Frieze Art Fair, NADA, and the Armory Show. The tradition of selling art at auction dates back to the 17th century and continues to thrive today. Art auctions deal in the most highly valued of art, such as works by Picasso, Manet, Jeff Koons, and Andy Warhol. The leading auction houses are Christie's and Sotheby's.

National Pride

Art can be used to advance nationalistic goals by providing a state or nation with political and social legitimacy.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate the relationship between certain types of artwork and national pride

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Romantic nationalism refers to the phenomenon by which a state derives power from the unity of those it governs, whether it be through culture , religion, customs, language, or race.
- Romantic nationalism was a key component of Romanticism as well as certain post-Enlightenment philosophies.
- National anthems, national epics, and national treasures are part of the language of Romantic nationalism, and date back to the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Today, cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—is regarded as highly valuable.
- A "national treasure" refers to shared culture which has been deemed exceptionally valuable.
- Governments influence the artistic output of their regions by presenting grants and awards to artists whose careers they wish to support.

Key Terms

- **worldview**:The totality of one's beliefs about reality.
- **national treasure**:A person, place, or object that is deemed of great value to an entire nation, usually due to its cultural significance.

Art can be used to advance nationalistic goals by providing a state or nation with political and social legitimacy. "Romantic nationalism" refers to the phenomenon by which a state derives power from the unity of those it governs, whether it be through culture, religion, customs, language, or race. Romantic nationalism was a key component of Romanticism as well as certain post-Enlightenment philosophies that focused on the development of national language, folklore, and traditional customs. This form of nationalism arose in reaction to imperial and dynastic hegemony , which acquired legitimacy not from the bottom-up but from the

top-down; in other words, from the authority down to the people. National anthems, national epics, and national treasures are part of the language of Romantic nationalism, and date back to the 18th and 19th centuries.

After the 1870s, Romantic nationalism became a very familiar movement in the arts that allowed for a form of reinterpretation of the past, without being considered merely historicist. Nationalist movements for the separation of Finland and the kingdom of Bavaria from Germany proved successful, Czech and Serb nationalism created conflict, Welsh and Irish tongues experienced a poetic revival, and the Zionist movement both revived Hebrew and began immigration to Israel. In the first few decades of the 20th century, Romantic nationalism had exerted an important influence on political events. The belief that nation states forming around unities in culture and ethnicity was in some sense "natural" was prominently held. After the Second World War, however, Romantic nationalism took on a darker tone .

Some degree of art-based national pride still exists today. The age-old notion of the state gaining political prowess through its artistic output still holds true. Cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—is regarded as highly valuable. It is not uncommon for museums and art galleries to be owned by the state, thereby imparting biased and/or nationalistic world views on exhibitions. A "national treasure" refers to shared culture which has been deemed exceptionally valuable and could be a skilled musician, such as Yo-Yo Ma, or a cultural object of great value , such as Britain's Bayeux tapestry . Governments influence the artistic output of their regions by presenting grants and awards to artists whose careers they wish to support—a model which is not unlike the dynastic patronage common throughout Europe in the past.

Bayeux Tapestry: The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—nearly 70 metres (230 ft) long, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England concerning William, Duke of Normandy and Harold, Earl of Wessex (later King of England) and culminating in the Battle of Hastings.

Museums and Private Collections

Museums and private collections are engaged in both the collection and display of works of art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the history and role of museums and private collections in the consumption of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early museums began as the private collections of wealthy families and individuals.
- "Cabinets of curiosity," or cabinets that held collections of artifacts and art objects, were the beginnings of museums and private collections.
- The majority of significant museums were opened to the public in the 18th century Enlightenment Era, such as the Louvre and the Hermitage Museum.
- Numerous art works in museums today were donated from private collections.

- It is not uncommon to see a note next to a work of art in a temporary museum exhibition, stating that it is on loan from a particular private collection.

Key Terms

- **engaged**:Attached to a wall or sunk into it halfway.
- **Enlightenment**:A philosophical movement in 17th- and 18th-century Europe; the Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, emphasized rationalism.
- **conservation**:The act of preserving, guarding, or protecting; the keeping (of a thing) in a safe or entire state; preservation.

Museums are institutions that collect art objects and make them available for public viewing through either permanent or temporary exhibitions. A museum does not sell works of art, but essentially holds them in public trust, and engages in varying levels of education and conservation practices. Private collections are privately owned works of art which may or may not be available for viewing by the public. Museums and private collections are both engaged in the collection and display of works of art.

Early museums began as the private collections of wealthy families and individuals. Originally, only nobility collected art, but soon the wealthy classes began to adopt the habit of collecting and displaying archaeological and art objects in their salons and living rooms. “Cabinets of curiosity,” or cabinets that held these collections of artifacts and art objects, became commonplace, and were the beginnings of museums and private collections. Often, these private collections were available for viewing by the so-called “respectable” public, but the majority did not become open to the public until the 18th century.

The majority of significant museums were opened to the public in the 18th century, or the Enlightenment era, a time known for its pursuit and dissemination of knowledge throughout society. The arts were especially important during the Enlightenment and viewed as a deeply noble pursuit. The Grand Tour , which became very popular during this time, solidified the habit of collecting works for display from these trips abroad. Many of the most significant private collections of art were opened to the public in the 18th century, such as the Uffizi gallery in Florence, Italy; The Louvre in Paris, France; and The Hermitage Museum, founded in 1764 by Catherine the Great.

The Louvre, Paris: The Louvre museum in Paris was a private collection opened to the public in the 18th century.

Numerous art works in museums today were in fact donations from private collections. In addition, commonly a note is posted next to a work of art in a temporary museum exhibition stating that it is on loan from a particular private collection. Currently, some private collections remain private, while some are available for public viewings. The Frick Collection in New York City is one of

the preeminent small art museums in the city. Housed in the mansion of its owner, Henry Clay Frick, the collection includes old master paintings by Jan van Eyck, Fragonard, Rembrandt, and others.

Preservation and Restoration

Preservation and restoration is a profession devoted to the conservation of cultural heritage, such as works of art, for future generations.

Learning Objectives

Examine the profession of preserving and restoring art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The goal of the conservator is to attempt to maintain cultural heritage objects as close to their original condition as possible, for as long as possible.
- The tradition of conservation is considered by most to have begun in 1565, with the restoration of the Sistine Chapel frescoes .
- Today, all museums employ teams of conservators to keep their collections up to date, conduct frequent tests, and engage in analysis and documentation.
- Conservators are often involved in what is termed “preventative conservation,” which refers to protecting art and cultural works from damage from environmental conditions, such as temperature, humidity, and exposure to light.
- A guiding principle of conservation is the idea of “reversibility”; that is, any intervention with the object should be fully reversible.
- “Interventive conservation” refers to any act that involves a direct interaction between the conservator and the cultural material, such as cleaning, stabilizing, repairing, or replacing of parts.

Key Terms

- **fresco**:In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to wet or fresh lime mortar or plaster.
- **conservator**:A professional who works on the conservation and restoration of objects, particularly artistic objects.

Preservation and restoration is a profession devoted to the conservation of cultural heritage, such as works of art, for future generations. The activities involved in this profession include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventative conservation. The goal of the conservator is to attempt to maintain cultural heritage objects as close to their original condition as possible, for as long as possible. The conservator acts as a sort of steward for these objects, which range from archaeological to artistic.

The tradition of conservation is considered by most to have begun in 1565, with the restoration of the Sistine Chapel frescoes. During the 19th century, the fields of science and art became somewhat intertwined, and scientific processes were used to care for artistic objects. Today, all museums employ teams of conservators to keep their collections up-to-date, conduct frequent tests, and engage in analysis and documentation. In addition, numerous organizations create standardized methodologies for the conservation of art objects, such as the International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and the American Institute for Conservation.

A painting, before and after restoration: This before-and-after image of a painting and frame exemplifies how art restoration can restore an art work to its original state.

The conservator's activities are guided by ethical standards. They must choose if, when, and how to alter a work of art in order to bring it closer to its original state. Since the original state is often beyond the conservator's lifetime, a certain degree of guesswork is required. Conservators are often involved in what is termed "preventative conservation," which refers to protecting art and cultural works from damage from environmental conditions, such as temperature, humidity, and exposure to light. This is why, for example, it is common to see textiles or photography exhibited in dimly-lit galleries.

A guiding principle of conservation is the idea of "reversibility"; that is, any intervention with the object should be fully reversible, and the object should be able to be returned to its original state. "Interventive conservation" refers to any act that involves a direct interaction between the conservator and the cultural material, such as cleaning, stabilizing, repairing, or replacing of parts. The conservator is required to fully justify any work of this sort and to complete documentation of the process before and after. Examples of interventive conservation include securing flaking paint and the tinted varnish treatment, whereby the restorer applies a tinted varnish over the original varnish, giving the illusion that spots on a work have been repainted.

Conflicts

Destruction, mislabeling, appropriation, and repossession can contribute to conflicts surrounding the preservation of art.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the events that can contribute to conflicts in terms of the preservation of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- War, political unrest, accidents, and disaster are the typical outside factors that contribute to the non- preservation of art.
- Looting refers to when art is stolen during such times of conflict.
- Art repatriation refers to the process of returning artworks to their rightful owners.
- The use, or appropriation of, art has inspired much controversy and contributed to cultural subjugation. A prime example of appropriation and subjugation is seen in the appropriation of sacred Native American images, iconography , and sculptures for commercial use by non-natives.
- Copyright can give the creator of an original work exclusive rights to it, usually for a limited time.

Key Terms

- **Copyright**:The right by law to be the entity which determines who may publish, copy, and distribute a piece of writing, music, picture, or other work of authorship.
- **appropriation**:The use of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation applied to them.

While institutions and owners do their best to preserve works of art, it is not uncommon for conflicts to arise due to issues related to ownership, human error, destruction, and appropriation. War, political unrest, accidents, and disaster are the typical outside factors that contribute to preservation conflicts when it comes to works of art.

Ownership conflicts are common, especially during times of unrest, such as war, when there is a higher potential for unethical behavior. Art is often stolen, or looted, during periods of conflict, as well as destroyed. Plunder, appropriation, and spoliation are related terms that describe the process of looting. During World War II, the Nazis looted a lot of European art, much of which was eventually repatriated, or returned to, its rightful owners.

Appropriation is a complex issue in art. The appropriation of Native American iconography, sacred images, and sculptures for commercial use by non-natives has been a source of controversy, contributing to cultural subjugation. The Kachina doll, for example, is a sacred Hopi sculpture that was traditionally meant to be seen only during specific Hopi ritual events. Many commercial replicas have been created to sell to tourists, altering the original intent of the object.

Appropriation has been embraced in certain Western art movements. Dadaist and Surrealist works, for example, typically utilize a great deal of appropriation, as seen in Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*

Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919: *L.H.O.O.Q.* is an example of appropriation deemed acceptable in art.

A copyright can give the creator of an original work exclusive rights to it, usually for a limited time. However, after that time is up, the work of art might be appropriated and used by others, thereby creating conflict. The internet has further complicated issues surrounding ownership and appropriation, especially in art.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Kalachakra. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kalachakra.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- VirgenNino. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:VirgenNino.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Basmalah-1wm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Basmalah-1wm.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Religious art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconoclasm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/vajra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/religious-art--2. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Phurba. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Phurba. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Garu00e7on u00e0 la pipe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gar%C3%A7on_%C3%A0_la_pipe.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Garu00e7on u00e0 la pipe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gar%C3%A7on_%C3%A0_la_pipe. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- International Art Markets. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Art_Markets. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art dealer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_dealer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Armory Show (art fair). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Armory_Show_(art_fair). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art valuation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_valuation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art auction. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_auction%23Contemporary_market_structure. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Contemporary art gallery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_art_gallery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- curator. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/curator. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- nonprofit. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nonprofit. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bayeux hawking. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bayeux_hawking.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- National treasure. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/National_treasure. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of the United States. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_the_United_States%23The_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cultural production and nationalism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_production_and_nationalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romantic nationalism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romantic_nationalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- worldview. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/worldview. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- national treasure. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/national_treasure. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Le Louvre - Aile Richelieu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Louvre_-_Aile_Richelieu.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Private collection. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_collection. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Museum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frick Collection. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frick_Collection. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- conservation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/conservation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- engaged. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/engaged. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Enlightenment. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Enlightenment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art_Restoration_Painting_and_Frame_Restoration_before_and_after_Oliver_Brothers_Art_Restoration_Boston.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/e/eb/Art_Restoration,_Painting_and_Frame_Restoration,_before_and_after,_Oliver_Brothers_Art_Restoration,_Boston.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Conservation-restoration. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservation-restoration. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art restoration. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_restoration. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New media art preservation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_media_art_preservation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- conservator. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/conservator. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marcel Duchamp Mona Lisa LHOOQ. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Marcel_Duchamp_Mona_Lisa_LHOOQ.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cultural heritage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_heritage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Moral rights (copyright law). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_rights_(copyright_law). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Looted art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Looted_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Appropriation (art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Appropriation_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cultural property. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_property. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Copyright. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- appropriation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/appropriation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 1.4: Art in Society is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

1.5: Historical Context

Context of Creation

The political, socioeconomic, and cultural setting that a work of art is created in will affect how it is perceived within art history.

Learning Objectives

Recognize the importance of an artwork's context of creation to art history

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Patronage of the arts, and art history by extension, has been used throughout history to endorse the ambitions and agenda of the dominant power of any given age. Art history is the academic study of objects of art in their historical development and stylistic contexts (i.e., genre , design, form , and style).
- Art conveys political, religious, and philosophical themes and judgments that arise as much from the artist's environment as they do from his or her creative impulse.
- Some of the contextual forces that shape artists and their work are their teachers and the influences of preceding styles; their patrons and their demands; their audiences; and their general socioeconomic, political, and cultural climate.

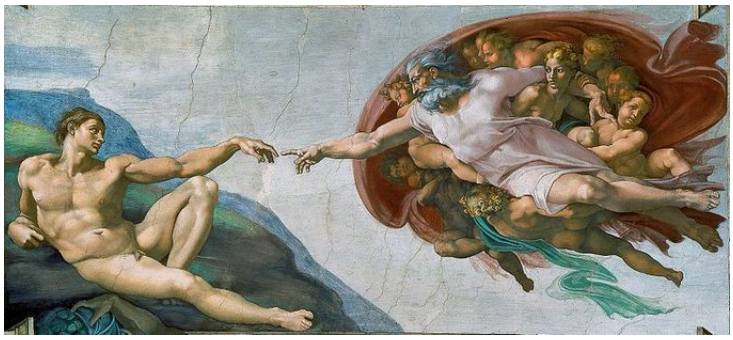
Key Terms

- **iconography**:The branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images.
- **oeuvre**:The complete body of an artist's work.

Art has existed almost as long as humankind itself and serves as a vehicle for the expression and communication of ideas and emotions. The canon of art history, however, has historically conveyed the political, religious, and philosophical ideals of the dominant power. Art history categorizes artworks and theories with a heavy reliance on the context or environment that the artwork was created in (i.e., its political, social, cultural, and economic settings).

Art history is the academic study of art objects in their historical development and stylistic contexts (i.e., genre, design, form, and style). A work of art from a particular historical period can be treated as an original source of information that was created at the time under study, and provides information about that time. Art historians study the contextual forces that shaped artists and their oeuvres , including their teachers and the influences of preceding styles; their patrons and their demands; their audiences; and their general socioeconomic, political, and cultural climate. These factors produce and influence different artistic styles and iconography , which are characteristic of their age and geographical location with reference to visual appearance, technique, and form.

In many ways, the historical backbone of art history is a celebratory chronology of beautiful creations of art commissioned by religious or civic institutions or wealthy individuals. Patronage of the arts has been used throughout history to endorse the ambitions and agenda of these institutions and individuals, and has been particularly important in the creation of religious art . For example, the Roman Catholic Church was an enthusiastic sponsor of the arts that resulted in a tremendous outpouring of architecture, painting, sculpture , and decorative crafts in medieval and Renaissance Europe.



The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel ceiling: Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City under the patronage of Pope Julius II between 1508 and 1512.

Intended Context of Reception

Art's context of reception depends on a variety of circumstances, both on the part of the artist as well as the artistic community the artist is participating in.

Learning Objectives

Identify the non-motivated, as well as motivated, factors that have given rise to art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Art arises from a combination of non-motivated factors driven by the intrinsic human impulse towards harmony and creativity as well as motivated factors, which consciously aim to communicate specific messages to other individuals.
- Art may be used to evoke particular emotions or moods, for social inquiry and political change, for questioning and criticizing society, or as a means of propaganda or commercial advertisement for influencing popular conceptions.
- Religious art uses religious inspiration and themes in order to illustrate the principles of the religion and to provide spiritual instruction to audiences.
- Patronage of the arts was typically used as a means of expressing and endorsing political, social, and cultural agendas and of displaying personal prestige. Works of art commissioned by wealthy patrons usually reflect their desires and aims.

Key Terms

- **patron**:An influential, wealthy person who supports an artist, craftsman, scholar, or aristocrat.
- **motif**:A recurring or dominant element in a work of art.

Art's context of reception depends on a variety of circumstances, both on the part of the artist as well as the artistic community and climate that the artist is participating in. Throughout human history, art has been created across a range of media for many different reasons and to serve many different functions. Some of these purposes are intrinsic to the human instinct for harmony and balance, as well as the human desire to experience mysterious things and express the human imagination. Art can transcend the concept of utility or external purpose. These ideas are called the non-motivated purposes of art. However, art also comes from intentional, conscious actions that aim towards specific external goals, and those qualify as the motivated purposes of art. Motivated purposes usually arise from the artwork's historical context, which consists of a multitude of different factors, including the social, political, economic, and cultural settings of the period; the artist's patrons; and the artist's intended audience.

Primarily, art is a form of communication, and like most forms of communication, has intents and goals directed toward other people. It may be used for entertainment, seeking to evoke particular emotions or moods in viewers , or for social inquiry and political change by portraying aspects of society in complimentary or critical ways.

Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830: This painting reflects contemporary events, commemorating the July Revolution of 1830, which toppled Charles X of France. A woman personifying liberty leads the people forward over the bodies of the fallen, holding the flag of the French Revolution in one hand and brandishing a musket with the other. The painting reflects the context of the time: namely, a shift towards representing political current events in art.

Similarly, art may also be used as a form of propaganda by subtly influencing popular conceptions, or for commercial purposes, by making specific products more attractive to potential consumers. Religious or sacred art uses religious inspiration and motifs in order to illustrate the principles of a religion in a tangible form, and is often intended to provide spiritual instruction and connection with believers.

Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with Eight Angels*, 1478: An example of religious art, this painting was commissioned by the Catholic Church during the Renaissance. Like a great deal of religious art, the painting is meant to communicate the spiritual beauty of the religious concept echoed in the aesthetic beauty of an oil painting. The work reflects the context of its time, in which art was driven nearly exclusively by religious institutions and used to illustrate and provide instruction about the principles of the religion.

Through the course of history, much of art has traditionally been patronized by wealthy and powerful individuals, including rulers and aristocrats, as well as various civic and religious institutions. Patronage of the arts was typically used as a means of expressing and endorsing political, social, and cultural agendas and of displaying personal prestige. Works of art commissioned by wealthy patrons usually reflect their desires and aims.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Creaciu00f3n de Adu00e1n (Miguel u00c1ngel). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Creaci%C3%B3n_de_Ad%C3%A1n_(Miguel_%C3%81ngel).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Creation of Adam. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Creation_of_Adam. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Patronage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Primary source. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_source. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art history. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_history. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- oeuvre. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/oeuvre. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Eugu00e8ne Delacroix - La libertu00e9 guidant le peuple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix_-_La_libert%C3%A9_guidant_le_peuple.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sandro Botticelli 061. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sandro_Botticelli_061.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Patronage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- patron. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/patron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- motif. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/motif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 1.5: Historical Context is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Prehistoric Art

2.1: The Stone Age
2.2: The Paleolithic Period
2.3: The Mesolithic Period
2.4: The Neolithic Period
2.5: The Bronze Age

This page titled 2: Prehistoric Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.1: The Stone Age

The Stone Age

Stone Age art illustrates early human creativity through small portable objects, cave paintings, and early sculpture and architecture.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic Periods of the Stone Age, giving a brief description of the art from each period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Stone Age lasted from 30,000 BCE to about 3,000 BCE and is named after the main technological tool developed at that time: stone. It ended with the advent of the Bronze Age and Iron Age .
- The Stone Age is divided in three distinct periods: the Paleolithic Period or Old Stone Age (30,000 BCE–10,000 BCE), the Mesolithic Period or Middle Stone Age (10,000 BCE–8,000 BCE), and the Neolithic Period or New Stone Age (8,000 BCE–3,000 BCE).
- The art of the Stone Age represents the first accomplishments in human creativity, preceding the invention of writing.

Key Terms

- **Parietal Art**:Paintings, murals, drawings, etchings, carvings, and pecked artwork on the interior of rock shelters and caves; also known as cave art.
- **prehistory**:The span of time before recorded history; all the time preceding human existence and the invention of writing.
- **Nomad**:A member of a community of people who move from one place to another, rather than settling permanently in one location.

The Stone Age

The Stone Age is the first of the three-age system of archaeology, which divides human technological prehistory into three periods: the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. The Stone Age lasted roughly 3.4 million years, from 30,000 BCE to about 3,000 BCE, and ended with the advent of metalworking.

The Stone Age has been divided into three distinct periods:

- Paleolithic Period or Old Stone Age (30,000 BCE–10,000 BCE)
- Mesolithic Period or Middle Stone Age (10,000 BCE–8,000 BCE)
- Neolithic Period or New Stone Age (8,000 BCE–3,000 BCE)

The art of the Stone Age represents the first accomplishments in human creativity, preceding the invention of writing. While numerous artifacts still exist today, the lack of writing systems from this era greatly limits our understanding of prehistoric art and culture .

The Art of the Stone Age: Paleolithic

The Paleolithic era is characterized by the emergence of basic stone tools and stone art in the archaeological record. For the first time, humans began to create durable products of self expression that served no function for survival. The diagnostic art of this period appears in two main forms: small sculptures and large paintings and engravings on cave walls. There are also various examples of carved bone and ivory flutes in the Paleolithic era, indicating another art form utilized by prehistoric humans.

Paleolithic small sculptures are made of clay, bone, ivory, or stone and consist of simple figurines depicting animals and humans. In particular, Venus figurines are the most indicative of this era. They are highly stylized depictions of women with exaggerated female parts representing fertility and sexuality. They typically date to the Gravettian period (26,000–21,000 years ago), but the earliest known Venus figurine (Venus of Hohle Fels) dates to at least 35,000 years ago, and the most recent (Venus of Monruz) dates to roughly 11,000 years ago. They are most common in the Mediterranean region, but there are examples from as far as

Siberia. Archaeologists can only speculate on their meaning, but their ubiquitous nature indicates a universal human attraction to art and possibly religion.

Venus of Hohle Fels: Oldest known Venus figurine. Also the oldest known, undisputed depiction of a human being in prehistoric art. Made of mammoth tusk and found in Germany.

Venus of Laussel, an Upper Paleolithic (Aurignacian) carving:

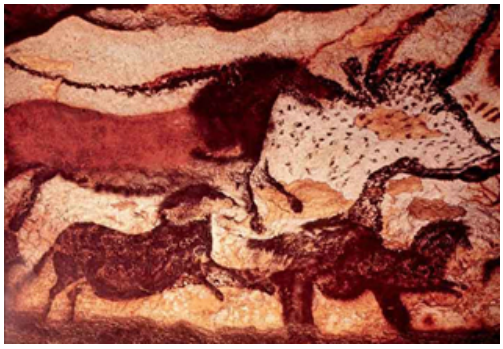
The second main form of Paleolithic art consists of monumental cave paintings and engravings. This type of rock art is typically found in European cave shelters, dating to 40,000–14,000 years ago, when the earth was largely covered in glacial ice. The images are predominately depictions of animals, human hand prints, and geometric patterns. The most common animals in cave art are the more intimidating ones, like cave lions, woolly rhinoceroses, and mammoths . These paintings could be creative recordings of nature, factual recordings of events, or part of some spiritual ritual , but scholars generally agree there is a symbolic and/or religious function to cave art.

The Art of the Stone Age: Mesolithic

From the Paleolithic through the Mesolithic, cave paintings and portable art such as figurines, statuettes, and beads predominated, with decorative figured workings also seen on some utilitarian objects. Venus figurines—an umbrella term for a number of prehistoric female statuettes portrayed with similar physical attributes—were very popular at the time. These figurines were carved from soft stone (such as steatite , calcite, or limestone), bone or ivory, or formed of clay and fired. The latter are among the oldest

ceramics known. Also in this period, personal accessories and adornments were made from shell and bone. All the examples mentioned above fall under the category of portable art: small for easy transport.

Archaeological discoveries across a broad swath of Europe (especially southern France, like those at Lascaux; northern Spain; and Swabia, in Germany) include over two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings, and sculptures that are among the earliest undisputed examples of representational image-making. Paintings and engravings along the caves' walls and ceilings fall under the category of parietal art .



Prehistoric cave paintings in Lascaux, France:

The Art of the Stone Age: Neolithic

The Neolithic saw the transformation of nomad human settlements into agrarian societies in need of permanent shelter. From this period there is evidence of early pottery, as well as sculpture, architecture, and the construction of megaliths . Early rock art also first appeared in the Neolithic period.

Female figure from Tumba Madžari, Republic of Macedonia:

The End of the Stone Age

The advent of metalworking in the Bronze Age brought additional media available for use in making art, an increase in stylistic diversity, and the creation of objects that did not have any obvious function other than art. It also saw the development in some areas of artisans, a class of people specializing in the production of art, as well as in early writing systems.

By the Iron Age, civilizations with writing had arisen from Ancient Egypt to Ancient China.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- venus of hohle fels.pdf.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_of_Hohle_Fels. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Venus-de-Laussel-vue-generale-noir.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_the_Upper_Paleolithic%23/media/File:Venus-de-Laussel-vue-generale-noir.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Golemata_Majka.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic%23/media/File:Golemata_Majka.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lascaux 03. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lascaux_03.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Venus of Laussel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_of_Laussel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prehistoric art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of the Upper Paleolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_the_Upper_Paleolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Parietal Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Parietal%20Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- prehistory. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prehistory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nomad. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomad. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of the Middle Paleolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_the_Middle_Paleolithic. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 2.1: The Stone Age is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.2: The Paleolithic Period

Paleolithic Architecture

The oldest examples of Paleolithic dwellings are shelters in caves, followed by houses of wood, straw, and rock.

Learning Objectives

Describe Paleolithic dwellings and shelters

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early humans chose locations that could be defended against predators and rivals and that were shielded from inclement weather.
- Weather, water, and time have destroyed the majority of campsites; our understanding of Paleolithic dwellings is therefore limited.
- Caves are the most famous example of Paleolithic shelters.

Key Terms

- **Mammoth**:Alarge, hairy, extinct elephant-like mammal of the taxonomic genus Mammuthus.
- **Hut**:A small wooden shed, a primitive temporary dwelling.
- **Paleolithic**:Early stage of the Stone Age, when primitive stone tools were used.

The Paleolithic Age, or Old Stone Age, spanned from around 30,000 BCE until 10,000 BCE and produced the first accomplishments in human creativity. Due to a lack of written records from this time period, nearly all of our knowledge of Paleolithic human culture and way of life comes from archaeologic and ethnographic comparisons to modern hunter-gatherer cultures. The Paleolithic lasted until the retreat of the ice, when farming and use of metals were adopted.

Paleolithic Societies

A typical Paleolithic society followed a hunter-gatherer economy. Humans hunted wild animals for meat and gathered food, firewood, and materials for their tools, clothes, or shelters. The adoption of both technologies—clothing and shelter—cannot be dated exactly, but they were key to humanity's progress. As the Paleolithic era progressed, dwellings became more sophisticated, more elaborate, and more house-like. At the end of the Paleolithic era, humans began to produce works of art such as cave paintings, rock art, and jewelry, and began to engage in religious behavior such as burial and rituals .

Dwellings and Shelters

Early men chose locations that could be defended against predators and rivals and that were shielded from inclement weather. Many such locations could be found near rivers, lakes, and streams, perhaps with low hilltops nearby that could serve as refuges. Since water can erode and change landscapes quite drastically, many of these campsites have been destroyed. Our understanding of Paleolithic dwellings is therefore limited.

As early as 380,000 BCE, humans were constructing temporary wood huts . Other types of houses existed; these were more frequently campsites in caves or in the open air with little in the way of formal structure. The oldest examples are shelters within caves, followed by houses of wood, straw, and rock. A few examples exist of houses built out of bones.

Temporary wood hut: An artist's rendering of a temporary wood house, based on evidence found at Terra Amata (in Nice, France) and dated to the Lower Paleolithic era.

Caves

Caves are the most famous example of Paleolithic shelters, though the number of caves used by Paleolithic people is drastically small relative to the number of hominids thought to have lived on Earth at the time. Most hominids probably never entered a cave, much less lived in one. Nonetheless, the remains of hominid settlements show interesting patterns. In one cave, a tribe of Neanderthals kept a hearth fire burning for a thousand years, leaving behind an accumulation of coals and ash. In another cave, post holes in the dirt floor reveal that the residents built some sort of shelter or enclosure with a roof to protect themselves from water dripping on them from the cave ceiling. They often used the rear portions of the cave as middens, depositing their garbage there.

In the Upper Paleolithic (the latest part of the Paleolithic), caves ceased to act as houses. Instead, they likely became places for early people to gather for ritual and religious purposes.

Tents and Huts

Modern archaeologists know of few types of shelter used by ancient peoples other than caves. Some examples do exist, but they are quite rare. In Siberia, a group of Russian scientists uncovered a house or tent with a frame constructed of mammoth bones. The great tusks supported the roof, while the skulls and thighbones formed the walls of the tent. Several families could live inside, where three small hearths, little more than rings of stones, kept people warm during the winter. Around 50,000 years ago, a group of Paleolithic humans camped on a lakeshore in southern France. At Terra Amata, these hunter-gatherers built a long and narrow house. The foundation was a ring of stones, with a flat threshold stone for a door at either end. Vertical posts down the middle of the house supported roofs and walls of sticks and twigs, probably covered over with a layer of straw. A hearth outside served as the kitchen, while a smaller hearth inside kept people warm. Their residents could easily abandon both dwellings. This is why they are not considered true houses, which was a development of the Neolithic period rather than the Paleolithic period.

Paleolithic Artifacts

The Paleolithic era has a number of artifacts that range from stone, bone, and wood tools to stone sculptures.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of the artifacts during the Paleolithic era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

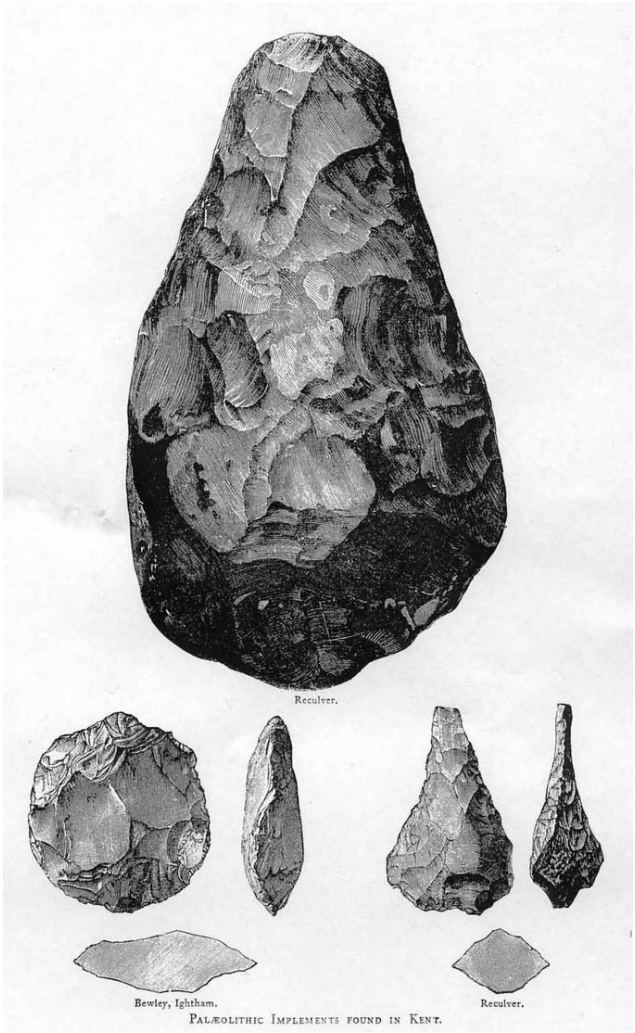
- Artifacts dating from the Lower and Middle Paleolithic remain disputed as objects of artistic expression.
- There is some evidence that a preference for aesthetic emerged in the Middle Paleolithic due to the symmetry inherent to discovered artifacts.

- The Venus of Tan-Tan is an alleged artifact found in Morocco that is believed by some archaeologists to be the earliest representation of the human form .
- The Venus of Berekhat Ram is believed by some to be a representation of a female human figure dating from the early Middle Paleolithic, however, the claim is highly contested.
- A carved elephant bone from Bilzingsleben has been interpreted as an early example of art making.
- The Paleolithic is characterized by the use of stone tools, although at the time humans also used wood and bone tools.

Key Terms

- **quartzite**:Ametamorphic rock consisting of interlocking grains of quartz.
- **ochre**:An earth pigment containing silica, aluminum, and ferric oxide
- **flint**:A hard, fine-grained quartz that fractures conchoidally and generates sparks when struck.
- **paleoliths**:A stone relic of the Paleolithic era.
- **artifacts**:Objects that are created by a human being with cultural and historical significance.

The Paleolithic or Old Stone Age originated around 30,000 BCE, lasting until 10,000 BCE, and is separated into three periods: the Lower Paleolithic (the earliest subdivision), Middle Paleolithic, and Upper Paleolithic. The Paleolithic era is characterized by the use of stone tools, although at the time humans also used wood and bone tools. Other organic commodities were adapted for use as tools, including leather and vegetable fibers; however, due to their nature, these have not been preserved to any great degree. Surviving artifacts of the Paleolithic era are known as paleoliths .



Acheulean hand-axes: Acheulean hand-axes from Kent. The types shown are (clockwise from top) cordate, ficron, and ovate. Evidence shows these early hominids intentionally selected raw materials with good flaking qualities and chose appropriate-sized stones for their needs to produce sharp-edged tools for cutting.

The earliest undisputed art originated in the Upper Paleolithic. However, there is some evidence that a preference for aesthetic emerged in the Middle Paleolithic due to the symmetry inherent in discovered artifacts and evidence of attention to detail in such things as tool shape, which has led some archaeologists to interpret these artifacts as early examples of artistic expression. There has been much dispute among scholars over the terming of early prehistoric artifacts as “art.” Generally speaking, artifacts dating from the Lower and Middle Paleolithic remain disputed as objects of artistic expression, while the Upper Paleolithic provides the first conclusive examples of art making.

Disputed Art(ifacts): Early Venuses

The Venus of Tan-Tan is an alleged artifact found in Morocco that is believed by some to be the earliest representation of the human form . The Venus, a 2.3 inch long piece of quartzite rock dated between 300,000 and 500,000 years ago during the Middle Paleolithic, was discovered in 1999 in a river terrace deposit on the north bank of the Draa River, just south of the Moroccan village of Tan-Tan. There is controversy among archaeologists as to its nature and origin. Some archaeologists believe it was created by a combination of geological forces as well as tool-based carving. Visible smudge stains have been interpreted by some as remnants of red ochre pigments. For others, the rock’s shape is simply the result of natural weathering and erosion, and any human shape is a mere coincidence.

Drawing of the Venus of Tan-Tan: The Venus of Tan-Tan is an alleged artifact found in Morocco that is believed by some to be the earliest representation of the human form.

The Venus of Berekhat Ram is a contemporary of the Venus of Tan-Tan, found at Berekhat Ram on the Golan Heights in 1981. Some believe it to be a representation of a female human figure, dating from the early Middle Paleolithic; however, the claim is highly contested. The object is a red tufic pebble, about 1.4 inches long, which has at least three grooves, possibly incised with a sharp-edged stone tool. The grooves have been interpreted as marking the neck and arms of the figure by some, while others believe these to be purely naturally-occurring lines .

Mask of la Roche-Cotard

Also known as the Mousterian Protofigurine, the Mask of la Roche-Cotard is an artifact from the Paleolithic period that was discovered in the entrance of the La Roche-Cotard cave, situated on the banks of the Loire River in France. Constructed using flint and bone, the stone is believed to represent the upper part of a face, while the bone has been interpreted as eyes. While some archaeologists question whether this artifact does indeed represent a rendered face, it has been occasionally regarded as an example of Paleolithic figurative artistic expression.

Bilzingsleben

Bilzingsleben is a site of early Paleolithic human remains discovered in Thuringia, Germany. The area was also the site of discovery of many stone and bone tools such as hoes, scrapers, points, and gougers. One bone fragment, an elephant tibia, has two groups of incised parallel lines which some have interpreted as an early example of art making. The regular spacing of the incisions, their sub-equal lengths, and V-like cross-sections suggest that they were created at the same time, with a single stone; however, no conclusive agreement has been made.

Blombos Cave

Discoveries of engraved stones in the Blombos Caves of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art. Made from ochre, the stones are engraved with abstract patterns, and while they are simpler than prehistoric cave paintings found in Europe, some scholars believe these engraved stones represent the earliest known artworks, dating from 75,000 years ago. Although, much like the other pieces, this belief remains contested.

Engraved ochre from the Blombos Cave: Engraved ochre from the Blombos Cave has led some historians to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of symbolic art.

Paleolithic Cave Paintings

Paleolithic cave paintings demonstrate early humans' capacity to give meaning to their surroundings and communicate with others.

Learning Objectives

Identify the types of images found in cave paintings in Europe dating from the Paleolithic era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Cave paintings can be grouped into three main categories: animals, human figures, and abstract signs.
- Animals depicted include familiar herbivores and predatory animals.
- The most spectacular examples of cave paintings are in southern France and northern Spain.
- Interpretations vary from prehistoric star charts, accounts of past hunts or mystical rituals for future ones, and shamanism .

Key Terms

- **chiaroscuro**:An artistic technique developed during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **shamanism**:A range of traditional beliefs and practices concerned with communication with the spirit world.
- **Parietal Art**:Paintings, murals, drawings, etchings, carvings, and pecked artwork on the interior of rock shelters and caves; also known as cave art.
- **polychromy**:The art or practice of combining different colors, especially brilliant ones, in an artistic way.

The Paleolithic , or Old Stone Age, ranges from 30,000 BCE to 10,000 BCE and produced the first accomplishments in human creativity, preceding the invention of writing. Archeological discoveries across a broad swath of Europe (especially southern France and northern Spain) include over two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings, and sculpture that are among the earliest

undisputed examples of representational image-making. Paintings and engravings along the caves' walls and ceilings fall under the category of parietal art .

Themes and Materials

The most common themes in cave paintings are large wild animals, such as bison, horses, aurochs , and deer. The species found most often were suitable for hunting by humans, but were not necessarily the typical prey found in associated bone deposits. For example, the painters of Lascaux, France left mainly reindeer bones, but this species does not appear at all in the cave paintings; equine species are the most common.

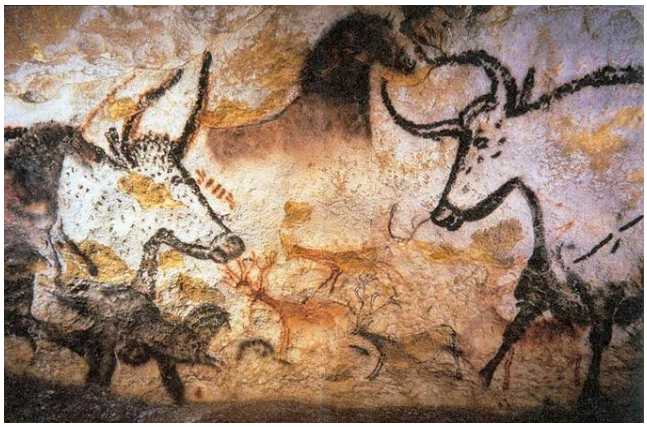
Drawings of humans were rare and were usually schematic in nature as opposed to the detailed and naturalistic images of animals. Tracings of human hands and hand stencils were very popular, however, as well as abstract patterns called finger flutings.

The pigments used appear to be red and yellow ochre , manganese or carbon for black, and china clay for white. Some of the color may have been mixed with fat. The paint was applied by finger, chewed sticks, or fur for brushes. Sometimes the silhouette of the animal was incised in the rock first, and in some caves many of the images were only engraved in this fashion, taking them out of a strict definition of "cave painting."

Main Examples of Cave Paintings: France and Spain

France

Lascaux (circa 15,000 BCE), in southwestern France, is an interconnected series of caves with one of the most impressive examples of artistic creations by Paleolithic humans.



Cave paintings in Lascaux, France: The most famous section of the cave is "The Great Hall of the Bulls," where bulls, equines, and stags are depicted.

Discovered in 1940, the cave contains nearly two thousand figures, which can be grouped into three main categories—animals, human figures, and abstract signs. Over nine hundred images depict animals from the surrounding areas, such as horses, stags, aurochs, bison, lions, bears, and birds—species that would have been hunted and eaten, and those identified as predators. The paintings contain no images of the surrounding landscape or the vegetation of the time.

The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave (circa 30,000 BCE) in the Ardèche department of southern France contains some of the earliest known paintings, as well as other evidence of Upper Paleolithic life. The Chauvet Cave is uncharacteristically large, and the quality, quantity, and condition of the artwork found on its walls have been called spectacular. Hundreds of animal paintings have been catalogued, depicting at least thirteen different species—not only the familiar herbivores that predominate Paleolithic cave art, but also many predatory animals, such as cave lions, panthers, bears, and cave hyenas.

Drawings of horses from the Chauvet Cave in France: The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in the Ardèche department of southern France is a cave that contains some of the earliest known cave paintings.

As is typical of most cave art, there are no paintings of complete human figures in Chauvet. There are a few panels of red ochre hand prints and hand stencils made by spitting pigment over hands pressed against the cave surface. Abstract markings—lines and dots—are found throughout the cave.

The artists who produced these unique paintings used techniques rarely found in other cave art. Many of the paintings appear to have been made after the walls were scraped clear of debris and concretions, leaving a smoother and noticeably lighter area upon which the artists worked. Similarly, a three-dimensional quality and the suggestion of movement are achieved by incising or etching around the outlines of certain figures. The art also includes scenes that were complex for its time—animals interacting with each other. For instance, a pair of wooly rhinoceroses are seen butting horns in an apparent contest for territory or mating rights.

Spain

Altamira (circa 18,000 BCE) is a cave in northern Spain famous for its Upper Paleolithic cave paintings featuring drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals and human hands. The cave has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Painting of a bison in the Great Hall of Policromes, Altamira, Spain: Altamira's famous Upper Paleolithic cave paintings feature drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals and human hands.

The long cave consists of a series of twisting passages and chambers. Human occupation was limited to the cave mouth, although paintings were created throughout the length of the cave. The artists used polychromy—charcoal and ochre or haematite—to create the images, often diluting these pigments to produce variations in intensity , creating an impression of chiaroscuro . They also exploited the natural contours in the cave walls to give their subjects a three-dimensional effect.

Interpretations

Like all prehistoric art, the purpose of these paintings remains obscure. In recent years, new research has suggested that the Lascaux paintings may incorporate prehistoric star charts. Some anthropologists and art historians also theorize that the paintings could be an account of past hunting success, or they could represent a mystical ritual to improve future hunting endeavors. An alternative theory, broadly based on ethnographic studies of contemporary hunter-gatherer societies, is that the paintings pertained to shamanism.

Paleolithic Sculpture

Paleolithic sculptures found in caves are some of the earliest examples of representational art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss aspects and characteristics of Paleolithic cave sculptures

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Sculptural work from the Paleolithic consists mainly of figurines , beads, and some decorative utilitarian objects constructed with stone, bone, ivory , clay, and wood.
- “Venus figurines” is an umbrella term for a number of prehistoric statuettes of women that have been found mostly in Europe, but also in Eurasia and Siberia.
- Venus figurines are characterized by shared stylistic features, such as an oval shape, large belly, wide-set thighs, large breasts, and the typical absence of arms and feet.
- Also known as the Mousterian Protofigurine, the Mask of La Roche-Cotard is a representational artifact from the Paleolithic period that was discovered in the entrance of a cave named La Roche-Cotard.
- Discoveries of engraved stones and beads in the Blombos Caves of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapien*s were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art.

Key Terms

- **Eurasia**:The largest landmass on Earth, consisting of Europe and Asia.
- **flint**:A hard, fine-grained quartz that fractures conchoidally and generates sparks when struck.

The Paleolithic or Old Stone Age existed from approximately 30,000 BCE until 10,000 BCE, and produced the first accomplishments in human creativity. Archeological discoveries across Europe and Asia include over two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings, and sculptures that are among the earliest undisputed examples of representational art-making. Sculptural work from the Paleolithic consists mainly of figurines, beads, and some decorative utilitarian objects constructed with stone, bone, ivory, clay, and wood. During prehistoric times, caves were places of dwelling as well as possible spaces for ritual and communal gathering. Unsurprisingly, caves were the locations of many archeological discoveries owing to their secluded locations and protection from the elements.

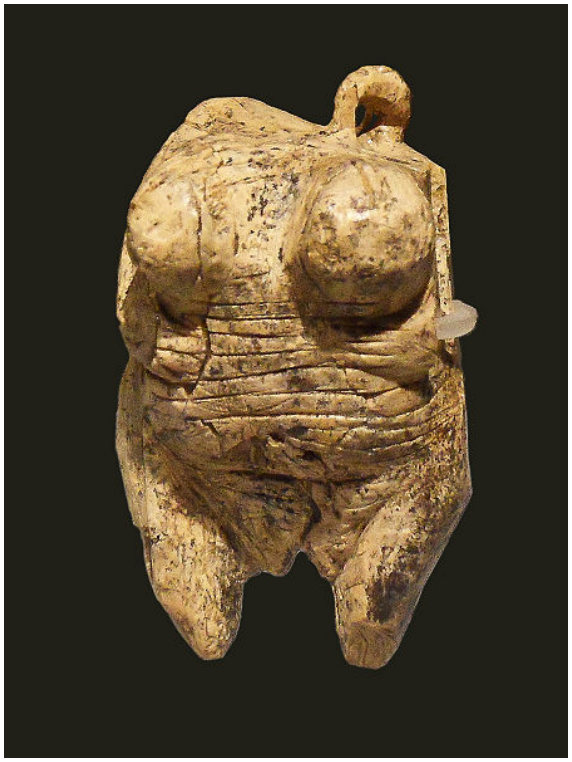
Venus Figurines

“Venus figurines” is an umbrella term for a number of prehistoric statuettes of women that have been found mostly in Europe, but also in Asia and Siberia, dating from the Upper Paleolithic. These figures are all quite small, between 4 and 25 cm tall, and carved mainly in steatite , limestone , bone, or ivory. These sculptures are collectively described as “Venus” figurines in reference to the Roman goddess of beauty, as early historians assumed they represented an ideal of beauty from the time.

The Venus figurines have sometimes been interpreted as representing a mother goddess; the abundance of such female imagery has led some to believe that Upper Paleolithic (and later Neolithic) societies had a female-centered religion and a female-dominated society. Various other explanations for the purpose of the figurines have been proposed, such as the hypothesis that the figurines were created as self-portraits of actual women.

Stylistic Features

Venus figures are characterized by shared stylistic features, such as an oval shape, large belly, wide-set thighs, large breasts, and the typical absence of arms and feet. Hundreds of these sculptures have been found both in open-air settlements and caves. The Venus of Hohle Fels, a 6 cm figure of a woman carved from a mammoth ‘s tusk, was discovered in Germany’s Hohle Fels cave in 2008 and represents one of the earliest found sculptures of this type.



The Venus of Hohle Fels: The Venus of Hohle Fels, a 6 cm figure of a woman carved from a mammoth’s tusk, was discovered in Germany’s Hohle Fels cave in 2008 and represents one of the earliest found sculptures of this type.

Additionally, the Venus of Willendorf is a particularly famous example of the Venus figure. While initially thought to be symbols of fertility, or of a fertility goddess, the true significance of the Venus figure remains obscure, as does much of prehistoric art.

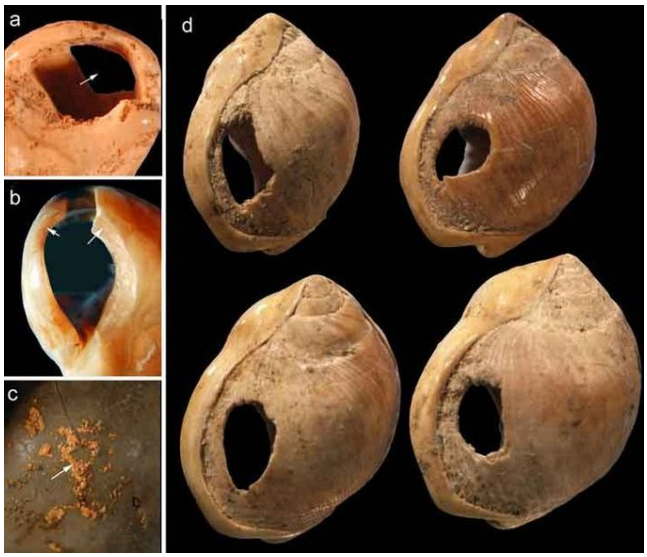
The Venus of Willendorf: The Venus of Willendorf is a particularly famous example of the Venus figure.

Mask of La Roche-Cotard

It is also known as the “Mousterian Protofigurine,” the Mask of La Roche-Cotard is an artifact from the Paleolithic period that was discovered in the entrance of a cave named La Roche-Cotard, on the banks of the Loire River in France. Constructed using flint and bone, the stone is believed to represent the upper part of a face, while the bone has been interpreted as eyes. While some archaeologists question whether this artifact does indeed represent a rendered face, it is typically regarded as an example of Paleolithic figurative artistic expression.

Blombos Cave

Discoveries of engraved stones and beads in the Blombos Cave of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art. Made from ochre , the stones are engraved with abstract patterns, while the beads are made from Nassarius shells. While they are simpler than prehistoric cave paintings found in Europe, some scholars believe these engraved stones represent the earliest known artworks, dating from 75,000 years ago.



Nassarius shell beads from the Blombos Cave: Discoveries of engraved stones and beads in the Blombos Cave of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 2.2: The Paleolithic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.3: The Mesolithic Period

Mesolithic Art

During the Mesolithic period, humans developed cave paintings, engravings, and ceramics to reflect their daily lives.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Mesolithic period with the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age is an archaeological term used to describe specific cultures that fall between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic Periods.
- The use of small chipped stone tools called microliths and retouched bladelets are the key factor to identify the Mesolithic as a prehistoric period.
- Mesolithic people likely continued the art forms developed during the Upper Paleolithic Period, including cave paintings and engravings , small sculptural artifacts , and early megalithic architecture.
- The most extensive collection of Mesolithic rock art has been found on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. These paintings consist of human and animal figures in scenes of hunting and early agricultural activities, such as collecting honey.
- A Mesolithic pendant excavated in England bears striking similarities with contemporary pendants produced in Denmark. Whether this points to intercultural contact or travel across vast expanses is unclear.

Key Terms

- **Microlith**:A small stone tool.
- **Mesolithic**:A prehistoric period that lasted between 10,000 and 5,000 BC.
- **Megalith**:A construction involving one or several roughly hewn stone slabs of great size.

The Mesolithic Period, or Middle Stone Age, is an archaeological term describing specific cultures that fall between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic Periods. While the start and end dates of the Mesolithic Period vary by geographical region, it dated approximately from 10,000 BCE to 8,000 BCE.

The Paleolithic was an age of purely hunting and gathering, but toward the Mesolithic period the development of agriculture contributed to the rise of permanent settlements. The later Neolithic period is distinguished by the domestication of plants and animals. Some Mesolithic people continued with intensive hunting, while others practiced the initial stages of domestication. Some Mesolithic settlements were villages of huts , others walled cities.

The type of tool used is a distinguishing factor among these cultures. Mesolithic tools were generally composite devices manufactured with small chipped stone tools called microliths and retouched bladelets. The Paleolithic utilized more primitive stone treatments, and the Neolithic mainly used polished rather than chipped stone tools.

Backed edge bladelet: Mesolithic tools were generally composite devices manufactured with small chipped small stone tools called microliths and retouched bladelets.

Art from this period reflects the change to a warmer climate and adaptation to a relatively sedentary lifestyle, population size, and consumption of plants—all evidence of the transition to agriculture and eventually the Neolithic period. Still, food was not always available everywhere, and Mesolithic populations were often forced to become migrating hunters and settle in rock shelters. It is difficult to find a unique type of artistic production during the Mesolithic Period, and art forms developed during the Upper Paleolithic (the latest period of the Paleolithic) were likely continued. These included cave paintings and engravings, small sculptural artifacts, and early architecture.

Mesolithic Rock Art

A number of notable Mesolithic rock art sites exist on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. The art consists of small painted figures of humans and animals, which are the most advanced and widespread surviving from this period in Europe and possibly worldwide. Notably, this collection is the largest concentration of such art in Europe. The human figure is frequently the main theme in painted scenes. When in the same scene as animals, the human runs towards them. Hunting scenes are the most common, but there are also scenes of battle and dancing, and possibly agricultural tasks and managing domesticated animals. In some scenes gathering honey is shown, most famously at Cuevas de la Araña en Bicorp.

The Man of Bicorp: The Man of Bicorp holding onto lianas to gather honey from a beehive as depicted on an 8000-year-old cave painting near Valencia, Spain.

The painting known as *The Dancers of Cogul* is a good example of the depiction of movement in static art. In this scene, nine women are depicted, something new in art of this region, some painted in black and others in red. They are shown dancing around a male figure with abnormally large phallus, a figure that was rare if not absent in Paleolithic art. Along with humans, several animals, including a dead deer or buck impaled by an arrow or atlatl, are depicted.

Dance of the Cogul: El Cogul, Catalonia, Spain.

The native Mesolithic populations were slow in assimilating the agricultural way of life, starting solely with the use of ceramics . It took a thousand years into the Neolithic period before they adopted animal husbandry (which became especially important to them) and plant cultivation. When they eventually developed interest in the more fertile areas utilized by the late Danubian cultures, they compelled the Danubian farmers to fortify their settlements.

Findings from Archaeological Excavations

Excavation of some megalithic monuments in Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, and France has revealed evidence of ritual activity, sometimes involving architecture, during the Mesolithic Period. One megalith (circa 9350 BCE), found submerged in the Strait of Sicily, was over 39 feet long and weighing nearly 530,000 pounds. Its purpose remains unknown. In some cases, however, megalith monuments are so far removed in time from their successors that continuity is unlikely. In other cases, the early dates or the exact character of activity are controversial.

An engraved shale pendant unearthed in Star Carr, England in 2015 is believed to be the oldest Mesolithic art form on the island of Great Britain. Engraved jewelry from this period outside of Scandinavia is extremely rare. Although the hole in the upper angle of the rock suggests that it was worn, archaeologists are currently analyzing the object to determine whether this was the case. The incised patterns are similar to those on pendants found in Denmark, which suggests contact with cultures on the continent or migration from the continent to Britain. However, these possibilities remain under investigation.

Star Carr pendant: The incised lines bear striking similarities to similar objects found in Denmark.

In northeastern Europe, Siberia, and certain southern European and North African sites, a “Ceramic Mesolithic” can be distinguished between 7,000-3,850 BCE. Russian archaeologists prefer to describe such pottery-making cultures as Neolithic, even though farming is absent. These pottery-making Mesolithic cultures were peripheral to the sedentary Neolithic cultures. They created a distinctive type of pottery with point or knob base and flared rims, manufactured by methods not used by the Neolithic farmers. Though each area of Mesolithic ceramics developed an individual style , common features suggest a single point of origin. The earliest manifestation of this type of pottery may have been around Lake Baikal in Siberia.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Star Carr pendant.jpg. **Provided by**: Internet Architecture. **Located at**: http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue40/8/images/index.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-064_Pintures_de_la_cova_dels_Moros,_exposiciu00f3_al_Museu_de_Gavu00e0.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=43345836. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Microlame 0.225.1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Microlame_0.225.1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 272px-Cueva_arana.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3255236%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- A Unique Engraved Shale Pendant from the Site of Star Carr: The Oldest Mesolithic Art in Britain. **Provided by**: Internet Archaeology. **Located at**: http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue40/8/index.html. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Rock Art of the Iberian Mediterranean Basin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_art_of_the_Iberian_Mediterranean_Basin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuevas de la Arau00f1a en Bicorp. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/8x7c1p. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roca de los Moros. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roca_dels_Moros. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Megalith. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Megalith%23Mesolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mesolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stone-Age Poland. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stone-Age_Poland%23Mesolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stone tool. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stone_tool%23Mode_V:_The_Microlithic_Industries. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Microlith. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Microlith. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 2.3: The Mesolithic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.4: The Neolithic Period

Neolithic Art

Art in the Neolithic Near East owes its existence to developments in agriculture, architecture, and other areas.

Learning Objectives

Outline the phases of the Neolithic period in the Near East and identify characteristics of each

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Neolithic is signified by a progression in behavioral and cultural characteristics including the cultivation of wild and domestic crops and the use of domesticated animals.
- Neolithic culture in the Near East is separated into three phases based on agricultural developments, advances in architecture, and the production of pottery.
- The temple located in southeastern Turkey at Gobekli Tepe circa 10,000 BCE is the oldest human-made place of worship. Among the architectural finds are pillars decorated with reliefs of animals.
- The settlement at ‘Ain Ghazal in present-day Jordan is best known as the earliest culture to produce large-scale human figures. Lacking details beyond the face and intended to be viewed only from the front, these likely served funerary purposes.
- Terra cotta pottery and fertility figures were found at Tell-Halaf in northern Syria and Tell-al-Ubaid on the coast of the Persian Gulf.

Key Terms

- **domesticated**:Tame, naturalized.

The Neolithic or New Stone Age was a period in human development from around 10,000 BCE until 3,000 BCE. Considered the last part of the Stone Age, the Neolithic period is signified by a progression in behavioral and cultural characteristics including the cultivation of wild and domestic crops and the use of domesticated animals.

The ancient Near East was home to the earliest civilizations within a region roughly corresponding to the modern Middle East, including Mesopotamia , ancient Egypt, ancient Iran, the Levant, and the Arabian peninsula. Sites in these locations dating to approximately 9500 BCE are considered the beginning of the Neolithic period.

Neolithic culture in the Near East is separated into three phases: Neolithic 1 (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A), Neolithic 2 (Pre-Pottery Neolithic B), and Neolithic 3 (Pottery Neolithic).

View of Gobekli Tepe: Situated in the southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, this is recognized as the oldest known human-made religious structure.

The Neolithic 1 phase likely began with a temple in southeastern Turkey at Gobekli Tepe circa 10,000 BCE. The structure is as the oldest known human-made place of worship. It features seven stone circles covering 25 acres that contain limestone pillars carved with animals, insects, and birds, believed to serve as roof supports. The complexity of the temple and the effort involved in its construction imply it was built by long-term settlers. The major advances of the Neolithic 1 phase revolve around developments in farming practices, such as harvesting, seed selection, and the domestication of plants and animals.

At the oldest layer of Gobekli Tepe, T-shaped mud brick pillars are decorated with abstract , enigmatic pictograms and carved animal reliefs. The pictograms may represent commonly understood sacred symbols known from Neolithic cave paintings elsewhere. The reliefs depict mammals such as lions, bulls, boars, foxes, gazelles, and donkeys; snakes and other reptiles; arthropods, such as insects and arachnids; and birds, particularly vultures. The deceased were likely exposed for consumption by vultures and other carrion birds.

Pillar with low reliefs of what are believed to be a bull, fox, and crane.: Although pillars with animal reliefs are abundant in Gobleki Tepe, very few depictions of human and humanoid figures have been found.

When the edifice was constructed, the surrounding country was likely forested and capable of sustaining this variety of wildlife, before millennia of settlement and cultivation led to the near-Dust Bowl conditions prevalent today.

Neolithic 2 (PPNB)

The Neolithic 2 began around 8800 BCE and is characterized by settlements built with rectangular mud-brick houses with single or multiple rooms, the greater use of domesticated animals, and advancements in tools. These developments in architecture point to settlement in permanent locations. While mud brick is perishable, the investment of time and effort in the construction of houses indicates the desire to remain in a single location for the long term. Burial findings and the preservation of skulls of the dead, often plastered with mud to create facial features, suggest an ancestor cult.

A settlement of 3,000 inhabitants was found in the outskirts of Amman, Jordan. Considered to be one of the largest prehistoric settlements in the Near East, ‘Ain Ghazal was continuously inhabited from approximately 7,250 – 5,000 BCE. This settlement produced what are believed to be the earliest large-scale human figures. Modeled from plaster, these consist of full statues and busts, some of which are two-headed. Great effort was put into modeling the heads, with wide-open eyes and bitumen-outlined irises. The statues represent men, women, and children. Women are recognizable by features resembling breasts and slightly enlarged bellies, but neither male nor female sexual characteristics are emphasized, and none of the statues have genitals. Only the faces have detail.

Figures from ‘Ain Ghazal (c. 7,500-5,000 BCE): Plaster and bitumen. Amman, Jordan.

Although they were produced to be free-standing, they were likely intended to be viewed only from the front, hence their disproportionate flatness. The manufacture of the statues would not have permitted them to last long. Since they were buried in pristine condition, they may have been produced for the purpose of intentional burial and never been displayed.

Neolithic 3 (PN)

Beginning around 6400 BCE, this period is characterized by the emergence of distinctive cultures throughout the Fertile Crescent , such as the Halafian (Turkey, Syria, Northern Mesopotamia) and Ubaid (Southern Mesopotamia).

Pottery was first produced and used in this era, a direct effect of agriculture and the permanent settlements that arose as a result. No longer nomadic , individuals used ceramic vessels to store the food they grew or raised and water collected from local sources. Additionally, the need arose for plates, cups, and additional objects used in the consumption of food and beverages.

Halafian Period

Tell Halaf is an archaeological site in northeastern Syria near the Turkish border, that flourished from about 6100 to 5400 BCE. It was the first site of Neolithic culture, subsequently dubbed Halafian culture, characterized by glazed pottery painted with geometric and animal designs.

View of the excavated ruins at Tell Halaf, Syria: It was the first find of the Neolithic culture, subsequently dubbed the Halaf culture.

The best known, most characteristic pottery of Tell Halaf, called Halaf ware, was produced by specialist potters. It was sometimes painted with one or two colors (the latter called polychrome) with geometric and animal motifs . Other types of Halaf pottery include unpainted cookware and ware with burnished surfaces.

There are many theories about the development of this distinctive pottery style . The polychromatic painted Halaf pottery has been proposed to be a “trade pottery”—pottery produced for export—however, the predominance of locally produced painted pottery in all areas of Halaf sites calls that theory into question. That said, Halaf pottery has been found in other parts of northern Mesopotamia and at many sites in Anatolia (Turkey) suggesting that it was widely used in the region.

Example of Halafian pottery: These were produced by specialist potters. Some were painted with geometric and animal motifs.

In addition to ceramics, the Halafian culture produced female figurines of partially baked clay and stone. Because of the prominence of their breasts and abdomens and subordination of their facial features, they are likely fertility figures. As the bands on the figure below suggest, these figurines were painted to some extent.

Tell Halaf fertility figure (c. 5,000 BCE): This statuette is seated with legs extended, her arms cradling her protruding breasts. Bands of pigment emphasize the full, rounded forms of her limbs and suggest facial features, a necklace, and loincloth.

Ubaid Period

The Ubaid culture flourished from about 6500 to 3800 BCE in Mesopotamia and is characterized by large village settlements that employed multi-room rectangular mud-brick houses. The appearance of the first temples in Mesopotamia, as well as greenish pottery decorated with geometric designs in brown or black paint, are important developments of this period. Tell-al-Ubaid is a low, relatively small mound site that extends about two meters above ground level. The lower level was a site where large amounts of Ubaid pottery, kilns , and a cemetery were discovered.

Pottery from the Late Ubaid period: Ubaid-style pottery has been found at various sites along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf.

Neolithic Monuments

Neolithic art in Western Europe is best represented by its megalithic (large stone) monuments.

Learning Objectives

Describe Neolithic cultural characteristics in Western Europe, particularly passage tombs and megaliths particular.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Neolithic or New Stone Age was a period in human development from around 10,000 BCE until 3,000 BCE.
- Stonehenge and Avebury, both located in the county of Wiltshire in England, are the best known megalithic henges . Both were built in stages over several centuries. Their exact purposes remain a matter of debate.
- Passage tombs or graves consist of narrow passages made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers been covered in earth or stone. A common layout is the cruciform passage grave .
- The carvings at Newgrange and Knowth are separated into ten categories consisting of curvilinear and rectilinear forms . The monuments at both sites are aligned with the solstices and equinoxes.
- The megalithic temples in Ggantija, Malta, have been theorized as possible sites of a fertility cult due to numerous figurines found on site.

Key Terms

- **rectilinear**:In a straight line.
- **henge**:A prehistoric enclosure in the form of an arc, defined by a raised circular bank and a circular ditch inside the bank, with one or more entrances to the enclosed open space.
- **trilithon**:A structure consisting of two stone pillars supporting a horizontal stone.
- **cruciform**:Having the shape of a cross.
- **serpentiform**:Having the form of a serpent.
- **curvilinear**:Formed by curved lines.
- **passage grave**:A burial chamber consisting of a narrow passage made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone.

Also known as the New Stone Age, the Neolithic period in human development lasted from around 10,000 BCE until 3,000 BCE. Considered the last part of the Stone Age, the Neolithic is signified by a progression in behavioral and cultural characteristics including the cultivation of wild and domestic crops and the use of domesticated animals.

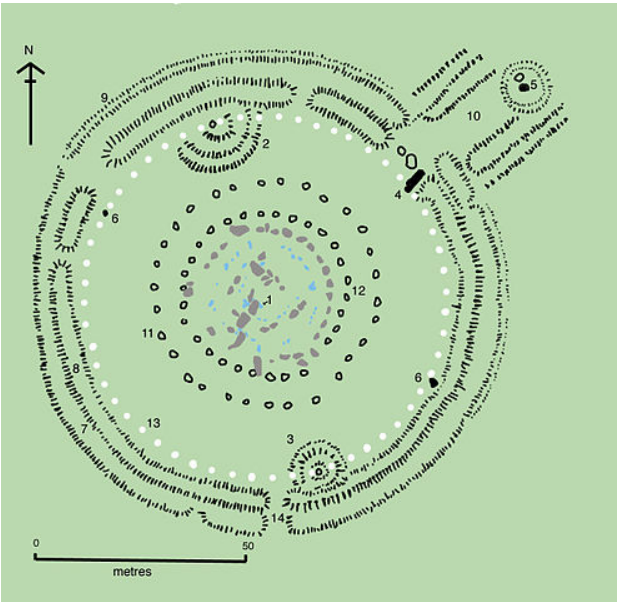
Agrarian societies first appeared in southeast Europe in the seventh millennium BCE. Through migration and cultural diffusion, Neolithic traditions spread to northwestern Europe by around 4500 BCE. The development of agriculture allowed groups of people to form larger permanent settlements in single locations, as opposed to living as nomadic hunter gatherers. Permanent settlements resulted in the construction of megalithic monuments requiring considerable time and effort that was unavailable to nomads .

Megalithic Henges

Neolithic societies produced female and animal statues, engravings , and elaborate pottery decoration. In Western Europe, though, this period is best represented by the megalithic (large stone) monuments and passage tomb structures found from Malta to Portugal, through France and Germany, and across southern England to most of Wales and Ireland.

Stonehenge

Perhaps the best known megalithic henge is Stonehenge, located on Salisbury Plain in the county of Wiltshire in south central England. Archaeologists believe it was constructed from 3000 BCE to 2000 BCE. The surrounding circular earth bank and ditch, which constitute the earliest phase of the monument, have been dated to about 3100 BCE. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the first bluestones in the innermost ring of Stonehenge were raised between 2400 and 2200 BCE, although they may have been at the site as early as 3000 BCE.



Plan of Stonehenge: Key to plan: (1) The Altar Stone, (2) barrow without a burial, (3) “barrows” without burials, (4) the fallen Slaughter Stone, (5) the Heel Stone, (6) two of originally four Station Stones, (7) ditch, (8) inner bank, (9) outer bank, (10) the Avenue, (11) ring of 30 pits called the Y Holes, (12) ring of 29 pits called the Z Holes, (13) circle of 56 pits, known as the Aubrey holes, (14) smaller southern entrance.

Although human remains have been found at the site, archaeologists are uncertain whether the site served funerary purposes, ritual purposes, or both. Its alignments with the sunrise of the summer solstice and sunset of the winter solstice present the possibility that the site served as a rudimentary astronomical calendar to help early agrarian societies acclimate to the approaching growing season and harvest.

Stonehenge: Salisbury Plain, England.

Even the smallest bluestones weigh several tons each. These stones, so-called because they appear blue when wet, were quarried approximately 150 miles away in the Prescelli Mountains in southwest Wales. Even more impressive, the quarrying and transport of the stones took place without the aid of the wheel, requiring a sophisticated method of transport and construction involving felled trees and earthen mounds. The larger Sarcen stones that form the post-and-lintel ring and he free-standing trilithons were quarried approximately 25 miles to the north of Salisbury Plain, requiring the same transport system of felled trees and earthen mounds.

Avebury

One of the best known prehistoric sites in the United Kingdom, Avebury contains the largest stone circle in Europe. Located in the same county as Stonehenge, Avebury lies north of the better-known site. Constructed over several hundred years in the third millennium BCE, the monument comprises a large henge with a large outer stone circle and two separate smaller stone circles situated inside the center of the monument. Its original purpose is unknown, although archaeologists believe that it was likely used for ritual or ceremony . The Avebury monument was part of a larger prehistoric landscape containing several older monuments.

Avebury: Part of the south inner circle.

The chronology of Avebury's construction is unclear. It was not designed as a single monument but was the result of various projects undertaken at different times during late prehistory . Experts date the construction of the central cove to 3,000 BCE, the inner stone circle to 2,900 BCE, the outer circle and henge to 2,600 BCE, and the avenues to 2,400 BCE. The construction of Avebury and Stonehenge indicate that a stable agrarian economy had developed in this region of England by 4000 to 3500 BCE.

Passage Tombs

Passage tombs or graves consist of narrow passages made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone. Megaliths were commonly used in the construction of passage tombs and typically date to the Neolithic. A common layout is the cruciform passage grave, characterized by a cross-shaped structure.

Newgrange, Ireland

Newgrange is part of the Neolithic *Bru na Boinne* complex, a collection of passage tomb mounds built around 3200 BCE and located in County Meath, Ireland.

View of Newgrange, Ireland: Newgrange is more than five hundred years older than the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt and predates Stonehenge by about a thousand years.

The Newgrange monument is comprised of a large mound built of alternating layers of earth and stones, covered with growing grass and with flat white quartz stones studded around the circumference. The mound covers 4500 square meters of ground . Within, a passage stretches through the structure ending at three small chambers.

Newgrange contains various examples of abstract Neolithic art carved onto its rocks. These are separated into 10 categories consisting of curvilinear forms like circles, spirals, arcs, serpentiforms, and dot-in-circles, as well as rectilinear examples such as chevrons, lozenges, radials, parallel lines , and offsets.

There is no agreement as to what the site was used for, but it has been speculated that it had some form of religious significance due to its alignment with the rising sun which floods the stone room with light on the winter solstice.

Knowth, Ireland

Knowth is a Neolithic passage grave and monument located in the valley of the River Boyne in Ireland. Located in close proximity to similar sites such as Newgrange, Knowth consists of one large cruciform passage tomb and 17 smaller satellite tombs, estimated to date between 2500 and 2000 BCE.

View of the eastern passage, Knowth, Ireland: The east-west orientation of the passages at Knowth suggests astronomical alignment with the equinoxes.

Additionally, the monument contains three recesses and basin stones into which the cremated remains of the dead were placed. The right recess is larger and more elaborately decorated than the others, a typical trait of Irish passage graves. The reason, however, remains unknown. Many monuments at Knowth were megalithic tombs, and archaeologists speculate that most have religious significance.

Knowth is reputed to have approximately one-third of all megalithic art in Western Europe carved into its rock faces. Typical motifs include spirals, lozenges, and serpentiform markings. Much of the art was carved on the backs of stones, a phenomenon known as hidden art. There are many theories about the function of hidden art, including a desire to hide images or the recycling of stones in order to use both sides.

Ggantija, Malta

The megalithic temple complexes of Ggantija on the Mediterranean islands of Gozo and Malta are notable for their gigantic Neolithic structures dating to 3,600 BCE.

Entrance to megalithic temple at Ggantija, Malta: The Ġgantija temples are older than the pyramids of Egypt and have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Situated at the end of the Xanghra plateau and facing the southeast, the temples are built in a clover-leaf shape, with inner facing blocks marking the outline which was then filled with rubble. They lead to a series of semi-circular apses connected by a central

passage.

The temples have been theorized as the possible site of a fertility cult due to numerous figurines found on site. The Hypogeum of Hal-Saflieni, located in Pola, Malta, is a subterranean structure excavated circa 2500 BCE, the only prehistoric underground temple in the world, showing a degree of stone artistry unique to the Maltese islands.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Gu00f6bekli Tepe, Urfa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6bekli_Tepe,_Urfa.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-20100923_amman41.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11749560. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 319px-Gobekli_Tepe_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17377759. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frieze-group-3-example1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Frieze-group-3-example1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Halafpottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Halafpottery.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- TellHalaf,NE-palace1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TellHalaf,NE-palace1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 312px-Syrian_-_-Tel_Halaf-_Fertility_Figurine_-_Walters_482741_-_Three_Quarter.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18824531. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Ain Ghazal Statues. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/%27Ain_Ghazal_Statues. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gu00f6bekli Tepe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/Hw6xfN. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tell Halaf. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell_Halaf. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Halafian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Halafian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ubaid Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubaid_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Domesticated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/domesticated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Avebury_(South_Inner_Circle),_Wiltshire,_UK_-_Diliff.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=33014322%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 493px-Stonehenge_plan.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=167793. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ggantija Temples (1). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ggantija_Temples_(1).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Stonehenge,_Condado_de_Wiltshire,_Inglaterra,_2014-08-12,_DD_12.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35323162. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Knowth. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Knowth.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Newgrange ireland 750px. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Newgrange_ireland_750px.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rectilinear. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rectilinear. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cruciform. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cruciform. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Definition of Passage Grave in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/passage-grave. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stonehenge. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonehenge. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Henge. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/henge. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Avebury. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Avebury. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trilithon. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/trilithon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Passage Grave. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Passage_grave. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- u0120gantija. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%A0gantija. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Knowth. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowth. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Serpentiform. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/serpentiform. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Curvilinear. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/curvilinear. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 2.4: The Neolithic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

2.5: The Bronze Age

Art of the Bronze Age

The Bronze Age saw the birth of civilization and the development of advanced cultures in Europe, the Near East, and East Asia.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the art of the Bronze age found in the Ancient Near East, East Asia, and Western Europe

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Bronze Age is characterized by the use of copper and bronze as the chief hard materials in the manufacturing of implements and weapons.
- The Bronze Age is the earliest period for which we have direct written accounts, since the invention of writing coincides with its early beginnings.
- Cultures in the Near East and China developed the first systems of writing.
- Burials in the British Isles shifted from the communal interments of the Neolithic Age to more individual burials in barrows and cists .
- The Bronze Age is marked by widespread migrations and trade, especially across Europe and in the Mediterranean region.

Key Terms

- **barrow**:A mound of earth and stones raised over a grave or graves.
- **cist**:A small stone-built coffin-like box used to hold the bodies of the dead.
- **cairn**:A human-made pile of stones.
- **smelt**:Production of metal—especially iron—from ore in a process that involves the chemical reduction of melted metal compounds into purified metal.
- **metallurgy**:The science of metals: their extraction from ores, purification and alloying, heat treatment, and working.
- **civilization**:An organized culture encompassing many communities, often on the scale of a nation or a people; a stage or system of social, political, or technical development.

The Bronze Age is part of the three-age system of archaeology that divides human technological prehistory into three periods: the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age . The Bronze Age spanned from 3,300 to 1,200 BCE and is characterized by the use of copper and its alloy bronze as the chief hard materials in the manufacturing of implements and weapons. This period ended with further advancements in metallurgy , such as the ability to smelt iron ore.

Bronze castings: Assorted bronze Celtic castings dating from the Bronze Age, found as part of a cache, probably intended for recycling. Somerset County Museum, Taunton, UK.

The Bronze Age is the earliest period for which we have direct written accounts, since the invention of writing coincides with its early beginnings. Bronze Age cultures differed in development of the first writing. According to archaeological evidence, cultures in Egypt (hieroglyphs), the Near East (cuneiform), and the Mediterranean, with the Mycenaean culture (Linear B), had viable writing systems.

Linear B inscription: This fragment from the Mycenaean palace of Pylos contains information on the distribution of bovine, pig, and deer hides to shoe and saddle-makers. Linear B was the earliest Greek writing, dating from 1450 BCE, an adaptation of the earlier Minoan Linear A script. The script is made up of 90 syllabic signs, ideograms, and numbers. This and other tablets were fortuitously preserved when they were baked in the fire that destroyed the palace around 1200 BCE. It is on display at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

The Art of the Ancient Near East

Cultures in the ancient Near East (often called the Cradle of Civilization) practiced intensive year-round agriculture, developed a writing system, invented the potter's wheel, created a centralized government, law codes , and empires, and introduced social stratification, slavery, and organized warfare. Societies in the region laid the foundations for astronomy and mathematics.

From Mesopotamia came the empires of Sumeria, Babylon, and Assyria. From the fertile floodplains of the Nile emerged the Egyptians, with their great monuments and sophisticated society. From the Iranian Plateau came the Medes and then the Persians, who nearly succeeded in uniting the entire civilized world under one empire.

In Mesopotamian Babylonia, an abundance of clay and lack of stone led to greater use of mud brick. Babylonian temples were massive structures of crude brick supported by buttresses , with drains to remove rain. The use of brick led to the early development of the pilaster , column , frescoes , and enameled tiles. Walls were brilliantly colored and sometimes plated with zinc or gold, as well as with tiles. Painted terra cotta cones for torches were also embedded in the plaster. In Babylonia, three-

dimensional figures often replaced bas-relief—the earliest examples being the Statues of Gudea, which are realistic if somewhat clumsy. The paucity of stone in Babylonia made every pebble precious and led to perfection in the art of gem cutting.

Statue of Gudea: Neo-Sumerian period, circa 2,090 BCE.

In Ancient Egypt , the Bronze Age began in the Protodynastic period circa 3,150 BCE. The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian civilization, such as art, architecture, and many aspects of religion, took shape during the Early Dynastic period and lasted until about 2,686 BCE. During this period, the pantheon of the gods was established and the illustrations and proportions of their human figures developed; and Egyptian imagery , symbolism , and basic hieroglyphic writing were created. During the Old Kingdom, from 2686-2181 BCE, the Egyptian pyramids and other more natural sculptures were built. The first-known portraits were also completed. At the end of the Old Kingdom, the Egyptian style moved toward formalized seminude figures with long bodies and large eyes.

Reverse and obverse sides of Narmer Palette, this facsimile on display at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada: The Narmer Palette, named after Egyptian King Narmer, is a significant Egyptian archeological relic dating from about the 3,100 BCE, containing some of the earliest hieroglyphic inscriptions ever found.

The Art of East Asia

In the East, civilization emerged in the Indus River valley, and from the Yellow River came the beginnings of Chinese civilization. Chinese bronze artifacts are generally either utilitarian , like spear points or adze heads, or ” ritual bronzes,” more elaborate versions of everyday vessels in precious materials of everyday vessels, tools, and weapons. In addition to numerous large sacrificial tripods known as dings in Chinese, there are many other distinct shapes. Ritual bronzes were highly decorated with taotie motifs , including highly stylized animal faces, in three main types: demons, symbolic animals, and abstract symbols. Many large bronzes also bear cast inscriptions that comprise the bulk of surviving early Chinese writing and have helped historians and archaeologists piece together the history of China.

Ritual cooking vessel: China, Shang or Zhou dynasty bronze, c. 1000 BCE. Taotie – a mask of an imaginary animal with eyes, horns, snout, and jaw. Motif common in Shang and early Zhou dynasties.

The Art of Western Europe

The Atlantic Bronze Age is the period of approximately 1300 to 700 BCE that includes different cultures in Portugal, Andalusia, Galicia, and the British Isles. It is marked by economic and cultural exchange. Commercial contacts extended to Denmark and the Mediterranean. The Atlantic Bronze Age was defined by a number of distinct regional centers of metal production, unified by a regular maritime exchange of products.

Bronze sword blade (c. 800 BCE): Museum of National Antiques, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France.

In Great Britain, the Bronze Age is dated from around 2,100 to 750 BCE. Migration brought new people to the islands from the continent. Recent tooth enamel isotope research on bodies found in early Bronze Age graves indicate that some of the migrants came from the area of modern Switzerland. Burial of the dead, previously communal, became individual as bodies were interred in barrows and cists covered with cairns.

The greatest quantities of bronze objects in England were discovered in East Cambridgeshire—especially in Isleham, where more than 6,500 pieces were found. Alloying of copper with zinc or tin to make brass or bronze was practiced soon after the discovery of copper. The earliest identified metalworking site (Sigwells, Somerset) is much later, dated by Globular Urn style pottery to approximately the 12th century BCE.

The Bronze Age in Ireland commenced around 2,000 BCE, when copper was alloyed with tin and used primarily in the field of metallurgy. One of the characteristic types of artifact of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland is the flat axe, notably the Ballybeg-type flat axe. Ireland is also known for a large number of Early Bronze Age burials.

Bronze Age Rock Carvings

Petroglyphs, or rock engravings, exist around the world and range in purpose from ritual to communication to narration.

Learning Objectives

Define and describe the different kinds of petroglyphs found around the world

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rock carvings are found worldwide, with the highest concentrations in Africa, Scandinavia, Siberia, southwestern North America and Australia dating between the late Upper Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods, although some date to the Bronze Age .
- The majority of rock carvings were produced in caves or canyons by hunter-gatherers who inhabited the area and typically depicted animals and humans as well as some narrative scenes.
- Traditionally, individual markings are called motifs , while groups of motifs are known as panels.
- Some petroglyphs are thought to be astronomical markers, maps, or other such forms of communication. Carvings in Sweden seem to communicate land boundaries occupied by a specific tribe or clan.

- Common symbols such as the cup-and-ring mark have been found in various locations across Europe. Scholarly theories range from mere coincidence to migration to a common origin of the artists.

Key Terms

- **logogram**:A character or symbol that represents a word or phrase (e.g., a character of the Chinese writing system).
- **motifs**:Individual rock carvings.
- **panels**:Groups of rock carving motifs.
- **geocontourglyph**:A petroglyph that represents land form or surrounding terrain.

Petroglyphs (rock engravings) are images containing pictograms and logograms created by removing part of a rock surface via incising, picking, carving, and/or abrading. Rock carvings are found worldwide, with the highest concentrations in Africa, Scandinavia, Siberia, southwestern North America, and Australia dating between the late Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, approximately 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. However, some carvings date to the Bronze Age. Many rock carvings were produced by hunter-gatherers who inhabited the area and typically depicted animals and humans as well as some narrative scenes.

Petroglyphs in Tanum, Sweden (c. 1700–500 BCE).: Rock carving with the shape of a flock of birds.

Interpretations

Traditionally, individual markings are called *motifs*, while groups of motifs are known as panels. Rock carvings are found across a wide geographical and temporal scope of cultures . Scholars have devised numerous theories to explain their purpose, depending on location, age, and image type.

Some petroglyphs are thought to be astronomical markers, maps, or other such forms of communication. A petroglyph that represents a land form or the surrounding terrain is known as a *geocontourglyph*. Glyphs from the Nordic Bronze Age (c. 1700-500 BCE) seem to refer to a territorial boundary between tribes, in addition to possible religious meaning. It also appears that local or regional dialects from similar or neighboring peoples existed.

Composite photograph of petroglyphs from Häljesta, Sweden (c. 1700–500 BCE): The glyphs have been painted to make them more visible. They have been identified as (top to bottom, left to right): Plowing with oxen (the branch in the farmer's hand is assumed to be part of a fertility ritual), archer/hunter with bow, fishing from a small boat, (middle row) a procession of unknown nature, foot prints, (bottom row) man with dog, typical Scandinavian rock carving ship symbol.

Many researchers have noticed the notable resemblance of different styles of petroglyphs across different continents. This could be mere coincidence, an indication that certain groups of people migrated widely from some initial common area, or indication of a common origin.

One common symbol called the cup-and-ring mark has been found on petroglyphs in the British Isles as well as on the European continent in locations as diverse as Spain, Scandinavia, and Greece. This symbol consists of a concave depression, no more than a few centimeters in diameter, pecked into a rock surface and often surrounded by concentric circles also etched into the stone. Sometimes a linear channel called a gutter protrudes from the middle.

Laxe dos carballos (fourth-second millennium BCE): Cup-and-ring mark and deer hunting scenes. (The cup-and-ring mark lies to the right of the deer.) Campo Lameiro, Galicia, Spain.

Some scholars have suggested that the cup-and-ring mark was symbolically linked to water, having sacred associations in late prehistoric society. As evidence, they note that a number of the larger cups, referred to as basins, would have collected rain water. They believe that cup-and-ring marks look like the ripples produced when raindrops hit water.

Bronze Age Advancements in Metallurgy

The discovery of bronze through existing metallurgical techniques revolutionized the production of weapons and works of art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the development of metallurgy and how it impacted art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The discovery of bronze , produced by combining copper and tin, was a major advancement in metallurgy during the Bronze Age . A stronger material than its stone and copper predecessors, bronze allowed for the production of more durable weapons, armor, artistic media , and luxury objects.
- Bronze is divided into “classic” and “mild,” consisting of ten percent and six percent tin, respectively. Classic bronze is better suited for casting , while mild bronze is better suited for hammered objects.
- Bronze was originally used in the production of weapons, but artisans soon discovered its use as an artistic medium. Both product categories were highly valued, with hoards of axe blades discovered across Europe.
- Lost wax casting is the oldest method of producing bronze sculptures. *Dancing Girl* from Mohenjodaro is believed to be the oldest cast bronze sculpture.
- The Únětice culture of Central Europe was highly advanced in its metallurgical techniques. Among its most interesting artifacts is the *Nebra Sky Disk*, a hammered object consisting of bronze and gold. It has been interpreted as an astronomical instrument as well as an item of religious significance.

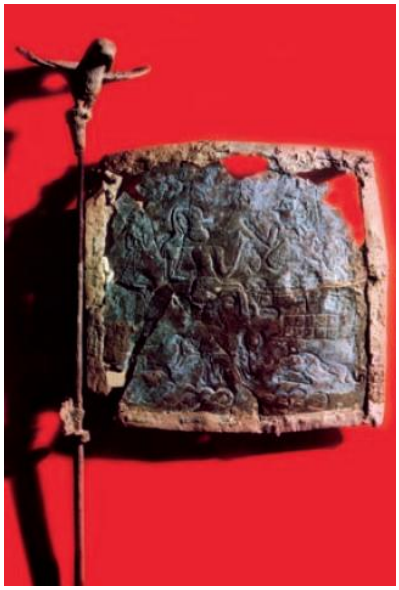
Key Terms

- **metallurgy**:The science and extraction of metals from ores, purification and alloying, heat treatment, and working.

An important development of the Bronze Age was the evolution of metallurgy, which resulted in the discovery of bronze. Certain metals, notably tin, lead and (at a higher temperature) copper, can be recovered from their ores by heating the rocks in a fire or blast furnace, a process known as smelting. The first evidence of this extractive metallurgy dates to Serbian sites from the fifth and sixth millennia BCE.

In approximately the fourth millennium BCE in Sumer, India, and China, it was discovered that combining copper and tin creates a superior metal, an alloy called bronze. This discovery represented the beginning of the Bronze Age, enabling people to create metal objects that were harder than previously possible. Bronze tools, weapons, armor, and building materials such as decorative tiles were more durable than their stone and copper predecessors.

Initially, bronze was made out of copper and arsenic, forming arsenic bronze, or from naturally or artificially mixed ores of copper and arsenic, with the earliest known artifacts coming from the Iranian plateau in the fifth millennium BCE. It was only later, approximately in 3500 BCE, that tin became the major non-copper ingredient of bronze. Tin bronze was superior to arsenic bronze in that the alloying process could be more easily controlled and the resulting alloy was stronger and easier to cast. Furthermore, unlike arsenic, metallic tin and fumes from tin refining are not toxic. In the Bronze Age, two forms of bronze were commonly used. “Classic bronze,” about ten percent tin, was used in casting. “Mild bronze,” about six percent tin, was hammered from ingots to make sheets. Bladed weapons were mostly cast from classic bronze, while helmets and armor were hammered from mild bronze. The flag pictured below was also likely hammered from mild bronze.



Bronze flag (third millennium BCE): Found in Shahdad, Kerman, (now Iran).

In many parts of the world, large hoards of bronze artifacts have been discovered, suggesting that bronze also represented a store of value and an indicator of social status. In Europe large hoards of bronze tools, typically socketed axes with little to no signs of wear, have been found. Axes were the most valued tools of the period.

Socketed axe blades.: A hoard of axes from the Bronze Age found in modern Germany. Archaeological Museum of the state of Brandenburg.

Although bronze was originally used for producing weapons, metal workers soon applied the alloy to the production of art. Among the oldest and most common method of producing bronze sculptures is through the lost wax process, which creates hollow one-of-a-kind sculptures in whatever form the artist chooses. *Dancing Girl* (c. 2500 BCE), from Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley, is perhaps the first bronze statue of the world. Although it is in a standing position, it was named *Dancing Girl* with an assumption of her profession. This is one of two bronze art works found at Mohenjodaro that show more flexible features when compared to other more formal poses. The girl is naked, wears a number of bangles and a necklace, stands in a naturalistic position with her right hand on her hip, and holds an object in her left hand, which rests against her thigh.

Dancing Girl (c. 2500 BCE): Bronze. 4 1/8 in × 2 in. National Museum, New Delhi.

The Únětice culture arose at the beginning of the Central European Bronze Age (2300-1600 BCE). The culture is distinguished by its characteristic metal objects including ingot torques, flat axes, flat triangular daggers, bracelets with spiral-ends, disk- and paddle-headed pins, and curl rings, which are distributed over a wide area of Central Europe and beyond. An interesting mixed media object from this culture is the *Nebra Sky Disk* (c. 1600 BCE), which consists of a blue-green patina inlaid with gold symbols. These symbols have been interpreted generally as a sun or full moon, a lunar crescent , and stars (including a cluster interpreted as the Pleiades). Two golden arcs along the sides, marking the angle between the solstices, were added later. A final addition was another arc at the bottom surrounded with multiple strokes (of uncertain meaning, variously interpreted as a solar barge with numerous oars, as the Milky Way, or as a rainbow). Likely produced through hammering, the disk is possibly an astronomical instrument as well as an item of religious significance.

Nebra Sky Disk (c. 1600 BCE): Bronze and gold. 30 cm diameter. Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 480px-Sword_bronze_age_(2nd_version).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Sword_bronze_age.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 393px-Assorted_bronze_castings.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=396369. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-NAMA_Linear_B_tablet_of_Pylos.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7633385%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Statue Gudea Met 59.2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_Gudea_Met_59.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Ritual cooking vessel. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ritual_cooking_vessel.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- NarmerPalette ROM-gamma. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NarmerPalette_ROM-gamma.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Narmer Palette. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer_Palette. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Metallurgy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/metallurgy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cairn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairn. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cist. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barrow. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/barrow. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prehistory. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistory%23Bronze_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/The Fall of Sumer and the Rise of the Babylonian Empire. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org's_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/The_Fall_of_Sumer_and_the_Rise_of_the_Babylonian_Empire%23Art_and_Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Technology. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology%23Metal_tools. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/What Is Civilization?. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org's_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/What_Is_Civilization?. **License**: *CC BY-SA:*

Attribution-ShareAlike

- Art History/Ancient Art. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/Ancient_Art%23Ancient_Egyptian_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Civilization. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Smelt. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Smelt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Tanun_carvings_birds.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=392205%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Laxe_dos_carballos_01.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16084690. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Haljesta.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=469453. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nordic Bronze Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordic_Bronze_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neolithic and Bronze-Age Rock Art in the British Isles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic_and_Bronze_Age_rock_art_in_the_British_Isles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cup-and-Ring Mark. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cup_and_ring_mark. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rock Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Petroglyph. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroglyph. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Logogram. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/logogram. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 488px-Nebra_Scheibe.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1500795%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze_flag,_Shadad_Kerman,_Iran.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19882058. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-ALB_-_Hortfund_Grou00df_Gaglow.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34300586%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 266px-Dancing_Girl_of_Mohenjo-daro.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12643758. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nebra Sky Disk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebra_sky_disk. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Metallurgy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Metallurgy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Unetice Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Unetice_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dancing Girl (Mohenjo-Daro). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dancing_Girl_(Mohenjo-daro). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 2.5: The Bronze Age is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Art of the Ancient Near East

3.1: Mesopotamia

3.2: Assyria

3.3: Neo-Babylonia

3.4: Persia

This page titled 3: Art of the Ancient Near East is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.1: Mesopotamia

The Mesopotamian Cultures

Sumer was an ancient Chalcolithic civilization that saw its artistic styles change throughout different periods in its history.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the historical importance of the various civilizations that existed in Mesopotamia

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Eridu economy produced abundant food, which allowed its inhabitants to settle in one location and form a labor force specializing in diverse arts and crafts.
- Writing produced during the early Sumerian period suggest the abundance of pottery and other artistic traditions.
- Elements of the early Sumerian culture spread through a large area of the Near and Middle East.
- The Sumerian city states rose to power during the prehistorical Ubaid and Uruk periods.

Key Terms

- **theocratic**:A form of government in which a deity is officially recognized as the civil ruler. Official policy is governed by officials regarded as divinely guided, or is pursuant to the doctrine of a particular religion or religious group.
- **casting**:A sculptural process in which molten material (usually metal) is poured into a mold, allowed to cool and harden, and become a solid object.
- **Cuneiform**:One of the earliest known forms of written expression that began as a system of pictographs. It emerged in Sumer around the 30th century BC, with predecessors reaching into the late 4th millennium (the Uruk IV period).
- **Chalcolithic**:Also known as the Copper Age, a phase of the Bronze Age in which the addition of tin to copper to form bronze during smelting remained yet unknown. The Copper Age was originally defined as a transition between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age.

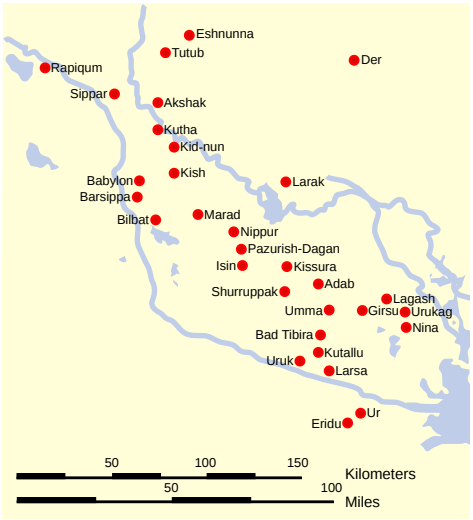
Sumer was an ancient civilization in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages. Although the historical records in the region do not go back much further than ca. 2900 BCE, modern historians believe that Sumer was first settled between ca. 4500 and 4000 BCE by people who may or may not have spoken the Sumerian language. These people, now called the “Ubaidians,” were the first to drain the marshes for agriculture; develop trade; and establish industries including weaving, leatherwork, metalwork , masonry, and pottery.

The Sumerian city of Eridu, which at that time bordered the Persian Gulf, is believed to be the world’s first city. Here, three separate cultures fused—the peasant Ubaidian farmers, the nomadic Semitic-speaking pastoralists (farmers who raise livestock), and fisher folk. The surplus of storable food created by this economy allowed the region’s population to settle in one place, instead of migrating as hunter-gatherers. It also allowed for a much greater population density, which required an extensive labor force and a division of labor with many specialized arts and crafts.

An early form of wedge-shaped writing called cuneiform developed in the early Sumerian period. During this time, cuneiform and pictograms suggest the abundance of pottery and other artistic traditions. In addition to the production of vessels , clay was also used to make tablets for inscribing written documents. Metal also served various purposes during the early Sumerian period. Smiths used a form of casting to create the blades for daggers. On the other hand, softer metals like copper and gold could be hammered into the forms of plates, necklaces, and collars.

Stele of the Vultures: Battle formations on a fragment of the Stele of the Vultures. Example of Sumerian pictorial cuneiform writing.

By the late fourth millennium BCE, Sumer was divided into about a dozen independent city-states delineated by canals and other boundary makers. At each city center stood a temple dedicated to the particular patron god or goddess of the city. Priestly governors ruled over these temples and were intimately tied to the city's religious rites.



Sumer: Map of the Cities of Sumer.

The Ubaid Period

The Ubaid period is marked by a distinctive style of painted pottery, as seen in the example below, produced domestically on a slow wheel. This style eventually spread throughout the region. During this time, the first settlement in southern Mesopotamia was established at Eridu by farmers who first pioneered irrigation agriculture. Eridu remained an important religious center even after nearby Ur surpassed it in size.

Ubaid pottery

The Uruk Period

The transition from the Ubaid period to the Uruk period is marked by a gradual shift to a great variety of unpainted pottery mass-produced by specialists on fast wheels. The trough below is an example of pottery from this period.

Uruk trough: The unpainted surface of this trough marks it as a production of the Uruk period.

By the time of the Uruk period (ca. 4100–2900 BCE), the volume of trade goods transported along the canals and rivers of southern Mesopotamia facilitated the rise of many large, stratified , temple-centered cities where centralized administrations employed specialized workers. Artifacts of the Uruk civilization have been found over a wide area—from the Taurus Mountains in Turkey, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, and as far east as Central Iran. The Uruk civilization, exported by Sumerian traders and colonists, had an effect on all surrounding peoples, who gradually developed their own comparable, competing economies and cultures.

Sumerian cities during the Uruk period were probably theocratic and likely headed by priest-kings (*ensis*), assisted by a council of elders, including both men and women. The later Sumerian pantheon (gods and goddesses) was likely modeled upon this political structure. There is little evidence of institutionalized violence or professional soldiers during the Uruk period. Towns generally lacked fortified walls, suggesting little, if any, need for defense. During this period, Uruk became the most urbanized city in the world, surpassing for the first time 50,000 inhabitants.

Gilgamesh

The earliest king authenticated through archaeological evidence is Enmebaragesi of Kish, whose name is also mentioned in the Gilgamesh epic (ca. 2100 BCE)—leading to the suggestion that Gilgamesh himself might have been a historical king of Uruk. As the *Epic of Gilgamesh* shows, the second millennium BCE was associated with increased violence. Cities became walled and increased in size as undefended villages in southern Mesopotamia disappeared.

Ceramics in Mesopotamia

The invention of the potter's wheel in the fourth millennium BCE led to several stylistic shifts and varieties in form of Mesopotamian ceramics.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate Ubaid pottery from later styles in Mesopotamian ceramics

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The invention and evolution of the potter's wheel allowed individuals to produce vessels at increasing speeds and in increasing numbers.
- Ubaid pottery was more decorative and unique than Uruk pottery.
- As ceramics evolved, shapes and sizes of clay objects became more varied.
- Clay could also be used for writing tablets that could be fired, if the owner believed the text was important.

Key Terms

- **ceramics**:The craft of making objects from clay.
- **throwing**:Shaping clay on a potter's wheel.
- **stylus**:A writing implement that incises lines into surfaces, such as clay.
- **kiln**:A special kind of oven used for firing ceramic objects at high temperatures.

Although ceramics developed in East Asia c. 20,000-10,000 BCE, the practice of throwing arose with the invention of the potter's wheel in Mesopotamia around the fourth millennium BCE. The earliest clay vessels date to the Chalcolithic Era, which is divided into the Ubaid (5000-4000 BCE) and Uruk (4000-3100 BCE) periods.

The Chalcolithic Era

The Ubaid period is marked by a distinctive style of fine quality painted pottery which spread throughout Mesopotamia. Ceramists produced vases, bowls, and small jars domestically on slow wheels, painting unique abstract designs on the fired clay.

Vase from the Late Ubaid Period, 4500-4000 BCE: A pottery jar from the Late Ubaid Period on display in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Experts differentiate the Ubaid period from the Uruk period by the style of pottery produced in each era. During the Uruk period, the potter's wheel advanced to allow for faster speeds. As such, ceramists could produce pottery more quickly, leading to the mass production of standardized, unpainted styles of vessels.

The Akkiadian Empire

As the Akkadian Empire overtook the Sumerian city-states , ceramists continued to produce bowls, vases, jars, and other objects in a variety of shapes and sizes. Like Uruk pottery, the surfaces of these objects were left unpainted, although some vessels appear to have a form of abstract reliefs on the surface. This photograph displays the various forms (including a form that resembles a present-day cake stand) that pottery took during the Akkadian Empire.

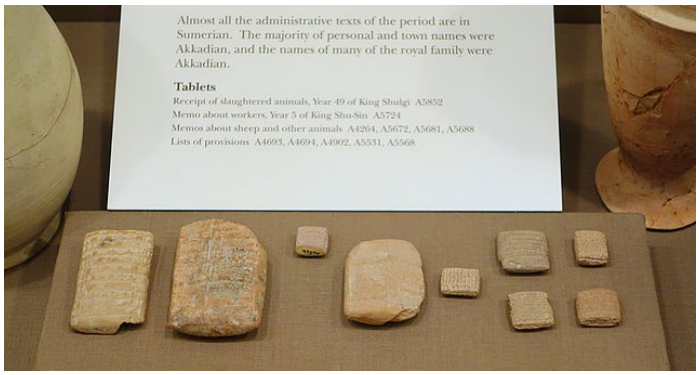
Akkadian pottery: A collection of Akkadian pottery on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

Ur III

The Third Ur Dynasty , better known as Ur III, witnessed the continuation of unpainted ceramic vessels that took a variety of forms. This photograph depicts an urn that resembles today's flower vases, as well as bowls, cups, and a smaller vase.

Pottery from the Ur III period: A collection of pottery from the Ur III period on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

As in previous eras, clay was also used to produce writing tablets that were incised with styluses fashioned from blunted reeds. Often, tablets were used for record-keeping (the ancient version of an office memo). Like other ceramic objects, tablets could be fired in a kiln to produce a permanent form if the text was believed significant enough to preserve. The tablets in the photograph below contain information about farm animals and workers.



Administrative texts in cuneiform writing : A collection of administrative texts in cuneiform writing on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

Babylonian Ceramics

Pottery produced during the “Old” Babylonian period shows a return to painted abstract designs and increased variety in forms. In this photograph, a bowl, a jar, and a goblet show remnants of paint on their exteriors.

Old Babylonian pottery: A collection of old Babylonian pottery on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

Sculpture in Mesopotamia

While the purposes that Mesopotamian sculpture served remained relatively unchanged for 2000 years, the methods of conveying those purposes varied greatly over time.

Learning Objectives

Identify the purposes of the sculptures featured in this concept

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mesopotamian sculptures were predominantly created for religious and political purposes.
- Common materials included clay, metal, and stone fashioned into reliefs and sculptures in the round .
- The Uruk period marked a development of rich narrative imagery and increasing lifelikeness of human figures.
- Hieratic scale was often used in Mesopotamian sculpture to convey the significance of gods and royalty.
- After the end of the Uruk period, subject matter began to depict scenes of warfare and became increasingly violent and intimidating.

Key Terms

- **register**:A usually horizontal division of separate scenes in two- or three-dimensional art.

- **hieratic scale**:A visual method of marking the significance of a figure through its size. The more important a figure is, the larger it appears.
- **terra cotta**:Clay that has been fired in a kiln.
- **high relief**:A sculpture that projects significantly from its background, providing deep shadows.
- **votive**:An object left in temples or other religious locations for a variety of spiritual purposes.
- **colossal**:Extremely tall.
- **lyre**:A hand-held stringed instrument resembling a small harp.
- **cylinder seal**:A small object adorned with carved images of animals, writing, or both, used to sign official documents.
- **in the round**:Sculpture that stands freely, separate from a background.
- **relief**:A sculpture that projects from a background.
- **mixed-media**:Artwork consisting of two or more different materials.
- **nomadic**:Mobile; moving from one place to another, never settling in one location for too long.

The current archaeological record dates sculpture in Mesopotamia the tenth millennium BCE, before the dawn of civilization . Sculptural forms include humans, animals, and cylinder seals with cuneiform writing and imagery in the round or as reliefs. Materials range from terra cotta , stones like alabaster and gypsum, and metals like copper and bronze .

Hunter-Gatherers and Samarra

Because the artists of the hunter-gatherer era were nomadic , the sculptures they produced were small and lightweight. Even after cultures discovered agricultural methods, such as irrigation and animal domestication, artists continued to produce small sculptures. The seated female figure below (c. 6000 BCE), likely carved from a single stone, hails from the prehistoric Samarra culture (5500-4800 BCE). Like many prehistoric female figures, the features of this sculpture suggest that it was used in fertility rituals . Its breasts are accentuated, and its legs are spread in a position that might resemble a woman in labor. While the artist emphasized areas of the body related to reproduction, he or she did not add facial features or feet to the figure.

Female statuette from Samarra (c. 6000 BCE) : A female statuette from Samarra on display at the Louvre Museum.

Uruk Period

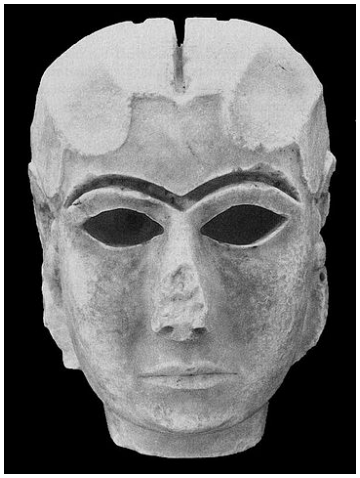
Spirituality and communication are reflected in sculptures dating the Uruk period (4000-3100 BCE) of the late prehistoric era. Scholars believe that the gypsum Uruk trough was used as part of an offering to Inanna, the goddess of fertility, love, war, and wisdom. In addition to reliefs of animals, reliefs of reed bundles, sacred objects associated with Inanna, adorn the exterior of the trough. For these reasons, scholars do not believe the trough was used for agricultural purposes.

Uruk trough (3300-3000 BCE): An Uruk trough on display at the British Museum.

Animals, along with forms of writing, also appear on early cylinder seals, which were carved from stones and used to notarize documents. Officials or their scribes rolled the seals on wet clay tablets as a form of signature. Cylinder seals were also worn as jewelry and have been found along with precious metals and stones in the tombs of the elite members of society. The trough, cylinder seals, and various other sculptures of the Uruk period serve as examples of the rich narrative imagery that arose during this time.

Uruk-period cylinder seal with stamped clay tablet (4100-3000 BCE): An Uruk-period cylinder seal and stamped clay tablet featuring monstrous lions and lion-headed eagles, on display at the Louvre Museum.

The Uruk period also marked an evolution in the depiction of the human body, as seen in the Mask of Warka (c. 3000 BCE), named for the present-day Iraqi city in which it was discovered. This marble “mask” is all that remains of a mixed- media sculpture that also consisted of a wooden body, gold leaf “hair,” inlaid “eyes” and “eyebrows,” and jewelry. Like most sculptures produced during the time, the sculpture was originally painted in an attempt to make it look lifelike.



Uruk Head, also known as the Mask of Warka (c. 3000 BCE) : The eyes and eyebrows on this Uruk marble head are hollow to accommodate the original inlay.

Early Dynastic Period

Sculpture built on older traditions and grew more complex during the Early Dynastic Period (2900-2350 BCE). Although artists still used clay and stone, copper became the dominant medium. Subject matter focused on spiritual matters, war, and social scenes.

A cylinder seal discovered in the royal tomb of Queen Puabi depicts two registers of a palace banquet scene punctuated by cuneiform script, marking a growing complexity in the imagery of this form of notarization. Each register features hieratic scale, in which the queen (upper register) and the king (lower register) are larger than their subjects.

Cylinder seal and stamped clay fragment from the tomb of Queen Puabi (c. 2600 BCE): The queen sits on the top register, while the king sits on the bottom. Each figure is set apart from his or her subjects through hieratic scale.

Another sculpture of note is a mixed-media bull's head that once adorned a ceremonial lyre found in Puabi's tomb in Ur. The head consists of a gold "face," lapis lazuli (a blue precious stone) "fur," and shell "horns." Although much of the lyre, whose dominant material was wood, disintegrated over time, contemporaneous imagery depicts lyres with similar decoration. Scholars believe that lyres were used in burial ceremonies and that the music that was played held religious significance.

Bull's head from ceremonial lyre (c. 2600 BCE) : This lyre was found in the tomb of queen Pu-Abi. The lapis lazuli, shell, red limestone decoration, and the head of the bull are original. The bull's head is covered with gold. The eyes are lapis lazuli and shell. The beard and hair are lapis lazuli. A lyre of the same type is shown on the Standard of Ur.

Sculptures in human form were also used as votive offerings in temples. Among the best known are the Tell Asmar Hoard, a group of 12 sculptures in the round depicting worshipers, priests, and gods. Like the cylinder seal found in Queen Puabi's tomb, the figures in the Tell Asmar Hoard show hieratic scale. Worshipers, as in the image below, stand with their arms in front of their chests and their hands in the position of holding offerings. Materials range from alabaster to limestone to gypsum, depending on each figure's significance. One common feature is the large hollowed out eye sockets, which were once inlaid with stone to make them appear lifelike. The eyes held spiritual significance, especially that of the gods, which represented awesome otherworldly power.

Votive figure of a male worshiper from Tell Asmar (2750-2600 BCE): The votive figure—made from alabaster, shell, black limestone, and bitumen—depicts a male worshiper of Enil, a powerful Mesopotamian god.

Akkadian Empire

During the period of the Akkadian Empire (2271-2154 BCE), sculpture of the human form grew increasingly naturalistic, and its subject matter increasingly about politics and warfare.

A cast bronze portrait head believed to be that of King Sargon combines a naturalistic nose and mouth with stylized eyes, eyebrows, hair, and beard. Although the stylized features dominate the sculpture, the level of naturalism was unprecedented.

Head of an Akkadian ruler, probably Sargon (2270-2215 BCE): This portrait combines naturalistic and stylized facial features and was cast using the lost-wax method. The eye sockets were once inlaid.

The Victory Stele of Naram Sin provides an example of the increasingly violent subject matter in Akkadian art, a result of the violent and oppressive climate of the empire. Here, the king is depicted as a divine figure, as signified by his horned helmet. In typical hieratic fashion, Naram Sin appears larger than his soldiers and his enemies. The king stands among dead or dying enemy soldiers as his own troops look on from a lower vantage point. The figures are depicted in high relief to amplify the dramatic significance of the scene. On the right hand side of the stele, cuneiform script provides narration.

Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (12th century BCE): The king stands in the center of the stele wearing a horned headpiece. His dead and dying enemies surround him while his own soldiers passively observe.

Babylon and Assyria

The second millennium BCE marks the transition from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age . The most prominent cultures in the ancient Near East during this period were Babylonia and Assyria. Clay was the dominant medium during this time, but stone was also used. The most common surviving forms of second millennium BCE Mesopotamian art are cylinder seals, relatively small free-standing figures, and reliefs of various sizes. These included cheap plaques, both religious and otherwise, of molded pottery for private homes.

Babylonian culture somewhat preferred sculpture in the round to reliefs. Depictions of human figures were naturalistic. The Assyrians, on the other hand, developed a style of large and exquisitely detailed narrative reliefs in painted stone or alabaster. Intended for palaces, these reliefs depict royal activities such as battles or hunting. Predominance is given to animal forms, particularly horses and lions, which are represented in great detail. Human figures are static and rigid by comparison, but also minutely detailed. The Assyrians produced very little sculpture in the round with the exception of colossal guardian figures, usually lions and winged beasts, that flanked fortified royal gateways. While Assyrian artists were greatly influenced by the Babylonian style, a distinctly Assyrian artistic style began to emerge in Mesopotamia around 1500 BCE.

Burney Relief (c. 1800-1750 BCE): The Burney Relief is a Mesopotamian terra cotta plaque in high relief of the Old-Babylonian period, depicting a winged, nude, goddess-like figure with bird's talons, flanked by owls, and perched upon supine lions. Apart from its distinctive iconography, the sculpture is noted for its high relief and relatively large size, which suggests that is was used as a cult relief, which makes it a very rare survival from the period.

Architecture in Mesopotamia

Domestic and public architecture in Mesopotamian cultures differed in relative simplicity and complexity. As time passed, public architecture grew to monumental heights.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate how Mesopotamian cultures approached domestic and public architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mesopotamian cultures used a variety of building materials. While mud brick is the most common, stone also features as a structural and decorate element.
- The ziggurat marked a major architectural accomplishment for the Sumerians , as well as subsequent Mesopotamian cultures.
- Palaces and other public structures were often decorated with glaze or paint, stones, or reliefs .
- Animals and human-animal hybrids feature in the religions of Mesopotamian cultures and were often used as architectural decoration.

Key Terms

- **alto relief**:A sculpture with significant projection from its background.
- **bas reliefs**:Sculptures that minimally project from their backgrounds.
- **public sphere**:The world outside the home.
- **ziggurat**:A towering temple, similar to a stepped pyramid, that sat in the center of Mesopotamian city-states in honor to the local pantheon.
- **private sphere**:The home, or the domestic realm.
- **load-bearing**:A form of architecture in which the walls are the structure's main source of support.
- **stacking and piling**:A form of load-bearing architecture in which the walls are thickest at the base and grow gradually thinner toward the top.
- **pilaster**:
  A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached; it gives the appearance of a support, but is only for decoration.

The Mesopotamians regarded "the craft of building" as a divine gift taught to men by the gods, and architecture flourished in the region. A paucity of stone in the region made sun baked bricks and clay the building material of choice. Babylonian architecture featured pilasters and columns , as well as frescoes and enameled tiles. Assyrian architects were strongly influenced by the Babylonian style , but used stone as well as brick in their palaces, which were lined with sculptured and colored slabs of stone instead of being painted. Existing ruins point to load-bearing architecture as the dominant form of building. However, the invention of the round arch in the general area of Mesopotamia influenced the construction of structures like the Ishtar Gate in the sixth century BCE.

Domestic Architecture

Mesopotamian families were responsible for the construction of their own houses. While mud bricks and wooden doors comprised the dominant building materials, reeds were also used in construction. Because houses were load-bearing, doorways were often the only openings. Sumerian culture observed a rigid division between the public sphere and the private sphere , a norm that resulted in a lack of direct view from the street into the home. The sizes of individual houses varied, but the general design consisted of smaller rooms organized around a large central room. To provide a natural cooling effect, courtyards became a common feature in the Ubaid period and persist into the domestic architecture of present-day Iraq.

Ziggurats

One of the most remarkable achievements of Mesopotamian architecture was the development of the ziggurat, a massive structure taking the form of a terraced step pyramid of successively receding stories or levels, with a shrine or temple at the summit. Like pyramids, ziggurats were built by stacking and piling . Ziggurats were not places of worship for the general public. Rather, only priests or other authorized religious officials were allowed inside to tend to cult statues and make offerings . The first surviving ziggurats date to the Sumerian culture in the fourth millennium BCE, but they continued to be a popular architectural form in the late third and early second millennium BCE as well .

Chogha Zanbil ziggurat: The Chogha Zanbil ziggurat was built in 1250 BC by Untash-Napirisha, the king of Elam, to honor the Elamite god Inshushinak.

The image below is an artist's reconstruction of how ziggurats might have looked in their heyday. Human figures appear to illustrate the massive scale of these structures. This impressive height and width would not have been possible without the use of ramps and pulleys.

An artist's reconstruction of a ziggurat: Like most Mesopotamian architecture, ziggurats were composed of sun-baked bricks, which were less durable than their oven-baked counterparts. Thus, buildings had to be reconstructed on a regular basis, often on the foundations of recently deteriorated structures, which caused cities to become increasingly elevated. Sun-baked bricks remained the dominant building material through the Babylonian and early Assyrian empires.

Political Architecture

The exteriors of public structures like temples and palaces featured decorative elements such as bright paint, gold, leaf, and enameling. Some elements, such as colored stones and terra cotta panels, served a twofold purpose of decoration and structural support, which strengthened the buildings and delayed their deterioration.

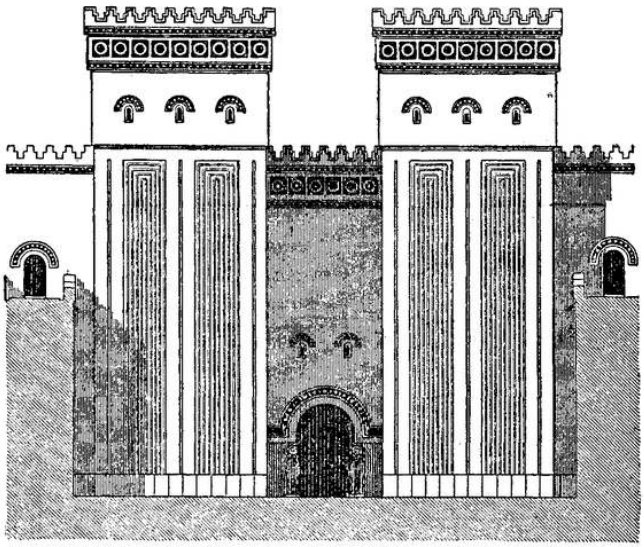
Between the thirteenth and tenth centuries BCE, the Assyrians replaced sun-baked bricks with more durable stone and masonry. Colored stone and *bas* reliefs replaced paint as decoration. Art produced under the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), Sargon II (722-705 BCE), and Ashurbanipal (668-627 BCE) inform us that reliefs evolved from simple and vibrant to naturalistic and restrained over this time span.

From the Early Dynastic Period (2900-2350 BCE) to the Assyrian Empire (25th century-612 BCE), palaces grew in size and complexity. However, even early palaces were very large and ornately decorated to distinguish themselves from domestic architecture. Because palaces housed the royal family and everyone who attended to them, palaces were often arranged like small cities, with temples and sanctuaries , as well as locations to inter the dead. As with private homes, courtyards were important features of palaces for both utilitarian and ceremonial purposes.

By the time of the Assyrian empire, palaces were decorated with narrative reliefs on the walls and outfitted with their own gates. The gates of the Palace of Dur-Sharrukin, occupied by Sargon II, featured monumental *alto* reliefs of a mythological guardian figure called a *lamassu* (also known as a *shedu*), which had the head of a human, the body of a bull or lion, and enormous wings. Lamassu figure in the visual art and literature from most of the ancient Mesopotamian world, going as far back as ancient Sumer (settled c. 5500 BCE) and standing guard at the palace of Persepolis (550-330 BCE).

Lamassu: This is only one example of how a lamassu would appear in Mesopotamian art. Other sculptures wear conical caps, face the front, or have the bodies of lions. In literature, some lamassu assumed female form.

Although the Romans often receive credit for the round arch, this structural system actually originated during ancient Mesopotamian times. Where typical load-bearing walls are not strong enough to have many windows or doorways, round arches absorb more pressure, allowing for larger openings and improved airflow. The reconstruction of Dur-Sharrukin shows that the round arch was being used as entryways by the eighth century BCE.

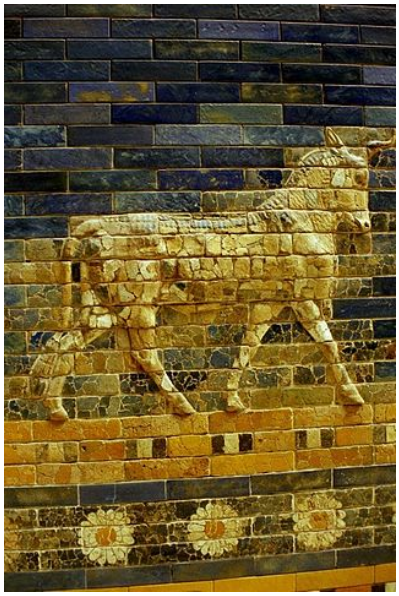


Palace of Dur-Sharrukin: Round arches can be found in the central portal, as well as in each window on the right and left.

Perhaps the best known surviving example of a round arch is in the Ishtar Gate, which was part of the Processional Way in the city of Babylon. The gate, now in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, was lavishly decorated with lapis lazuli complemented by blue glazed brick. Elsewhere on the gate and its connecting walls were painted floral motifs and *bas* reliefs of animals that were sacred to Ishtar, the goddess of fertility and war.

Ishtar Gate (c. 575 BCE): The reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.

The photograph above shows the immense scale of the gate. The photograph below shows the detail of a relief of a bull from the gate's wall.



Detail of bull relief on Ishtar Gate: An aurochs, or bull, above a flower ribbon.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Ubaid pottery.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubaid_period#/media/File:Frieze-group-3-example1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cities of Sumer (en). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cities_of_Sumer_(en).svg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Uruk_Trough_-British_Museum.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31079210. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Stele of Vultures detail 01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stele_of_Vultures_detail_01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Casting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Casting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sumer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuneiform. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuneiform. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- theocratic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/theocratic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chalcolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalcolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vase from the Late Ubaid Period. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubaid_period#/media/File:Frieze-group-3-example1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Old Babylonia Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Old_Babylonian_pottery_in_the_Oriental_Institute_Museum#/media/File:Old_Babylonian_pottery_-_Oriental_Institute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC07013.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cuneiform texts from Ur III. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ur_III_administrative_texts_-_Oriental_Institute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC06995.JPG#/media/File:Ur_III_administrative_texts_-_Oriental_Institute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC06995.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Akkadian Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40794666. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ur III Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ur_III_pottery_-_Oriental_Institute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC06984.JPG#/media/File:Ur_III_pottery_-_Oriental_Institute_Museum,_University_of_Chicago_-_DSC06984.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ubaid Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubaid_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of Mesopotamia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Mesopotamia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Uruk Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ur III Cuneiform Tablets. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40794957. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Babylonian Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40809484. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cuneiform. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuneiform_script#Akkadian_cuneiform. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ur III pottery. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40794961. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Akkadian Pottery . **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40794666. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bull's_head_of_the_Queen's_lyre_from_Pu-abi's_grave. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bull%27s_head_of_the_Queen%27s_lyre_from_Pu-abi%27s_grave_PG_800,_the_Royal_Cemetery_at_Ur,_Southern_Mesopotamia,_Iraq._The_British_Museum,_London..JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Victory_stele_of_Naram_Sin_9066. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Victory_stele_of_Naram_Sin_9066.jpg#/media/File:Victory_stele_of_Naram_Sin_9066.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Burney reflief. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Burney_Relief#/media/File:British_Museum_Queen_of_the_Night.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No*

Known Copyright

- Cylinder seal from tomb of Queen Pubai. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Nic%27s_events_-_British_Museum_with_Cory_and_Mary,_6_Sep_2007_-_185.jpg#/media/File:Flickr_-_Nic%27s_events_-_British_Museum_with_Cory_and_Mary,_6_Sep_2007_-_185.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sargon_of_Akkad. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sargon_of_Akkad.jpg#/media/File:Sargon_of_Akkad.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Uruk-period Cylinder Seal . **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cylinder_seal_lions_Louvre_MNB1167.jpg#/media/File:Cylinder_seal_lions_Louvre_MNB1167.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mask of Warka/Uruk Head. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:UrukHead.jpg#/media/File:UrukHead.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Votive of Male Worshiper from Tell Asmar. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mesopotamia_male_worshiper_2750-2600_B.C.jpg#/media/File:Mesopotamia_male_worshiper_2750-2600_B.C.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Female Statuette from Samarra. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:FemaleStatuetteSamarra6000BCE.jpg#/media/File:FemaleStatuetteSamarra6000BCE.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Uruk Trough. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/d/d8/Uruk_Trough_-British_Museum.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Samarra Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarra_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tell Asmar Hoard. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell_Asmar_Hoard. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inanna. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanna. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of Mesopotamia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Mesopotamia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Akkadian Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cylinder Seal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinder_seal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Uruk Trough. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk_Trough?oldid=716721429. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lyres of Ur. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyres_of_Ur. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Burney Relief. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Burney_Relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Choghazanbil2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chogha_Zanbil#/media/File:Choghazanbil2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 542px-Lammasu.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamassu#/media/File:Lammasu.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 568px-Palace_of_Khorsabad.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palace_of_Khorsabad.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 320px-Ish-tar_Gate_detail.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar_Gate#/media/File:Ish-tar_Gate_detail.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 32487-ziggurat-mesopotamia.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikispaces. **Located at**: mesopotamiadiv1.wikispaces.com/Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ishtar Gate. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ishtar_Gate_at_Berlin_Museum.jpg#/media/File:Ishtar_Gate_at_Berlin_Museum.jpg. **License**: *CC*

BY: Attribution

- Ishtar Gate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar_Gate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sargon II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sargon_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lamassu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamassu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mesopotamia. **Provided by**: Wikispaces. **Located at**: mesopotamiadiv1.wikispaces.com/Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashurbanipal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurbanipal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashurnasirpal II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurnasirpal_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Mesopotamia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Mesopotamia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Assyria. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Dynastic Period (Mesopotamia). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_(Mesopotamia). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sumer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Persepolis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Persepolis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 3.1: Mesopotamia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.2: Assyria

The Assyrian Culture

The Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian capitals of Nimrud, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh are known today for their ruins of great palaces and fortifications.

Learning Objectives

Describe the key aspects of the Assyrian capitals of Nimrud, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Nimrud, also known as Kalhu, was the Assyrian capital from the thirteenth century BCE until 706 BCE. Ashurnasirpal II made the city famous when he built a large palace and temples on top of ancient ruins c. 880 BCE.
- Dur-Sharrukin was a single-period site; therefore, few individual objects were found. The primary discoveries shed light on Assyrian art and architecture.
- Nineveh, the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire , rose to greatness under Sennacherib . He laid out new streets and squares and built within it the famous “palace without a rival”, the plan of which has been mostly recovered.

Key Terms

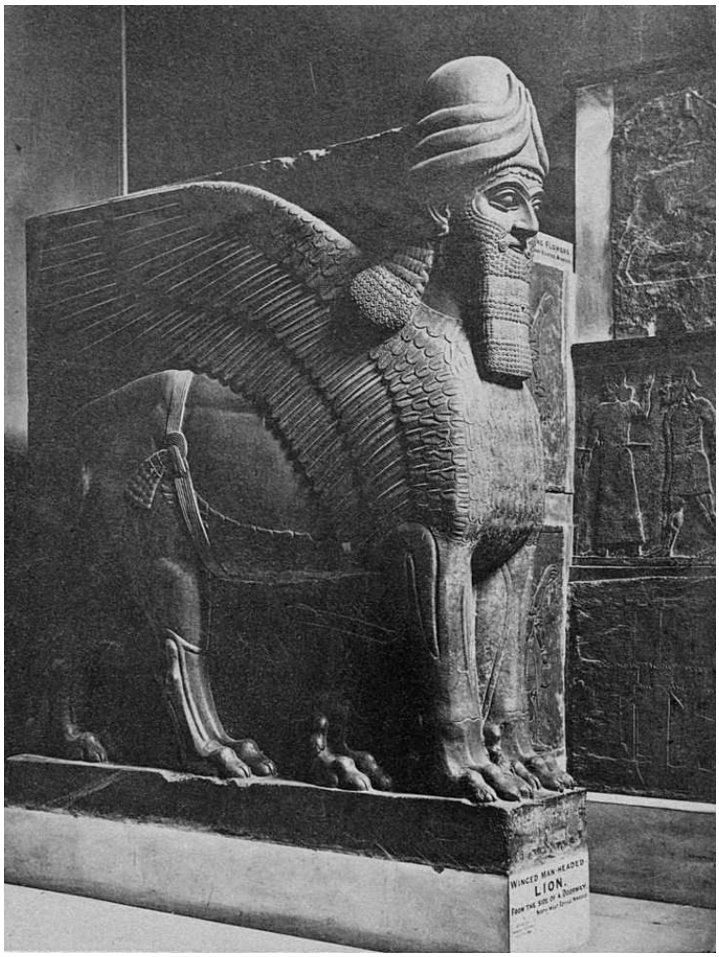
- **Obelisk**:A tall, square, tapered, stone monolith topped with a pyramidal point, frequently used as a monument.
- **ziggurat**:A temple tower of the ancient Mesopotamian valley, having the form of a terraced pyramid of successively receding stories.

Nimrud and Ashurnasirpal II

Nimrud is an ancient Assyrian city located in southern, modern Iraq on the River Tigris. In ancient times the city was called Kalhu. The ruins of the city are found some 30 kilometers (19 miles) southeast of Mosul.

The Assyrian king Shalmaneser I made Nimrud, which existed for about a thousand years, the capital in the thirteenth century BCE. The city gained fame when king Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria (c. 880 BCE) built a large palace and temples on the site of an earlier city that had long fallen into ruins. Nimrud housed as many as 100,000 inhabitants and contained botanic gardens and a zoologic garden. Ashurnasirpal’s son, Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), built the monument known as the Great Ziggurat and an associated temple. The palace, restored as a site museum, is one of only two preserved Assyrian palaces in the world. The other is Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh. Nimrud remained the Assyrian capital until 706 BCE when Sargon II moved the capital to Dur-Sharrukin, but it remained a major center and a royal residence until the city was completely destroyed in 612 BCE when Assyria succumbed under the invasion of the Medes.

Excavations at Nimrud in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries revealed remarkable bas- reliefs, ivories , and sculptures . A statue of Ashurnasirpal II was found in an excellent state of preservation , as were colossal winged man-headed lions, each guarding the palace entrance. The large number of inscriptions pertaining to king Ashurnasirpal II provide more details about him and his reign than are known for any other ruler of this epoch.



Gate Guardians: The Man-Headed Lions: This Portal Guardian (Lamassu) from Nimrud guarded the entrance to the palace at Nimrud.

Portions of the site have been also been identified, such as temples to Ninurta and Enlil, a building assigned to Nabu (the god of writing and the arts), and extensive fortifications. Furthermore, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, discovered in 1846, stands six-and-a-half-feet tall and commemorates the king's victorious campaigns from 859–824 BCE. It is shaped like a temple tower at the top, ending in three steps.

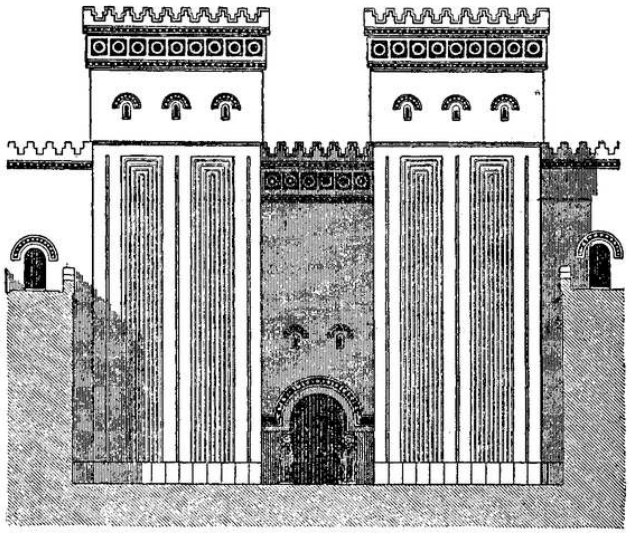
Black Obelisk: The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III commemorates the king's victorious campaigns from 859–824 BCE.

On one panel, Israelites led by king Jehu of Israel pay tribute and bow in the dust before king Shalmaneser III, who is making a libation to his god. The cuneiform text on the obelisk reads “Jehu the son of Omri” and mentions gifts of gold, silver, lead, and spear shafts . The “Treasure of Nimrud” unearthed in these excavations is a collection of over 600 pieces of gold jewelry and precious stones.

Obelisk detail: Depiction of either Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi, or Jehu’s ambassador, bowing before Shalmaneser III.

Sargon II and Dur-Sharrukin

Dur-Sharrukin, or present day Khorsabad, was the Assyrian capital in the time of King Sargon II. Today, Khorsabad is now a village in northern Iraq, and is still inhabited by Assyrians. The construction of Dur-Sharrukin was never finished. Sargon, who ordered the project, was killed during a battle in 705. After his death, his son and successor Sennacherib abandoned the project and relocated the capital with its administration to the city of Nineveh.



Palace of Khorsabad (artist’s reconstruction)

Dur-Sharrukin was constructed on a rectangular layout. Its walls were massive, with 157 towers protecting its sides. Seven gates entered the city from all directions. A walled terrace contained temples and the royal palace. The main temples were dedicated to the gods Nabu, Shamash, and Sin, while Adad, Ningal, and Ninurta had smaller shrines. A ziggurat was also constructed at the site. The palace was adorned with sculptures and wall reliefs, with its gates flanked by winged-bull *shedu* statues weighing up to 40 tons. On the central canal of Sargon’s garden stood a pillared pleasure-pavilion which looked up to a great topographic creation—a man-made Garden Mound. This mound was planted with cedars and cypresses and modeled after the Amanus mountains in northern Syria.

Winged bull: The winged bull figure, known as a *shedu* or a *lamassu*, was a common guardian figure in palace architecture.

The colossal bull statue (above) was uncovered outside the throne room. It was found split into three large fragments. The torso alone weighed about 20 tons. Since Dur-Sharrukin was a single-period site that was evacuated in an orderly manner after the death of Sargon II, few individual objects were found. The primary discoveries from Khorsabad shed light on Assyrian art and architecture.

Nineveh

Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, and the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Its ruins are across the river from the modern-day major city of Mosul in Iraq.

Today, Nineveh's location is marked by two large mounds, Kouyunjik and Nabī Yūnus "Prophet Jonah," and the remains of the city walls. These were fitted with fifteen monumental gateways which served as checkpoints on entering and exiting the ancient city, and were probably also used as barracks and armories. With the inner and outer doors shut, the gateways were virtual fortresses. Five of the gateways have been explored to some extent by archaeologists.

Nineveh was an important junction for commercial routes crossing the Tigris. Occupying a central position on the great highway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, Nineveh united the East and the West, and received wealth from many sources. Thus, it became one of the oldest and greatest of all the region's ancient cities, and the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The area was settled as early as 6000 BCE, and by 3000 BCE had become an important religious center for worship of the Assyrian goddess Ishtar.

It was not until the Neo-Assyrian Empire that Nineveh experienced a considerable architectural expansion. King Sennacherib is credited with making Nineveh a truly magnificent city during his rule (c. 700 BCE). He laid out new streets and squares and built within it the famous "palace without a rival", the plan of which has been mostly recovered. It comprised at least 80 rooms, many of which were lined with sculpture. A large number of cuneiform tablets were found in the palace. The solid foundation was made out of limestone blocks and mud bricks. Some of the principal doorways were flanked by colossal stone-door figures that included many winged lions or bulls with the heads of men. The stone carvings in the walls include many battle and hunting scenes, as well as depicting Sennacherib's men parading the spoils of war before him.

Royal Nineveh carving: The king hunting lion from the North Palace, Nineveh, seen at the British Museum.

Nineveh's greatness was short-lived. In around 627 BCE, after the death of its last great king Ashurbanipal, the Neo-Assyrian empire began to unravel due to a series of bitter civil wars, and Assyria was attacked by the Babylonians and Medes. From about 616 BCE, in a coalition with the Scythians and Cimmerians, they besieged Nineveh, sacking the town in 612, and later razing it to the ground .

The Assyrian empire as such came to an end by 605 BC, with the Medes and Babylonians dividing its colonies between them. Following its defeat in 612, the site remained largely unoccupied for centuries with only a scattering of Assyrians living amid the ruins until the Sassanian period, although Assyrians continue to live in the surrounding area to this day.

Architecture in Assyria

Assyrian architecture eventually emerged from the shadow of its predecessors to assume distinctive attributes, such as domes and diverse building materials, that set it apart from other political entities.

Learning Objectives

Identify the distinguishing characteristics of Assyrian architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Inscriptions and reliefs produced under the Assyrian Empire depict structures with octagonal and circular domes , which were unique to the region at the time.
- Assyrian ziggurats eventually consisted of enameled walls and two towers.
- Massive fortified walls are a common attribute in Assyrian fortresses, pointing to the political instability of the time and the need for architectural defense.
- Architectural materials in the Assyrian empire were quite diverse, consisting of a variety of woods, stones, and metals.

Key Terms

- **lamassu**: A guardian figure consisting of the head of a human, massive wings, and the body of a lion or bull.

During the Assyrian Empire's historical span from the 25th century BCE to 612 BCE, architectural styles went through noticeable changes. Assyrian architects were initially influenced by previous forms dominant in Sumer and Akkad. However, Assyrian structures eventually evolved into their own unique style.

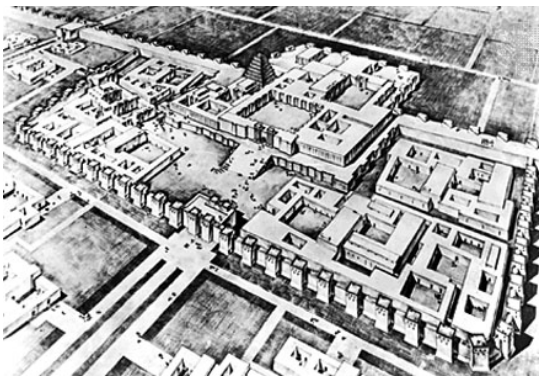
Temples

Little is known of the construction of Assyrian temples with the exception of the distinctive ziggurats and massive remains at Mugheir. Ziggurats in the Assyrian Empire came to be built with two towers (as opposed to the single central tower of previous styles) and decorated with colored enameled tiles. Contemporaneous inscriptions and reliefs describe and depict structures with

octagonal and circular domes, unique architectural systems for the time. Little remains of the temple at Mugheir, but the ruins of its base remain quite impressive, measuring 198 feet (60 m) long by 133 feet (41 m) wide by 70 feet (21 m) high.

Dur-Sharrukin

Building plans remained rectangular through much of the empire's history. The fortress of Sargon II (reigned 722–705 BCE) at Dur-Sharrukin, or Khorsabad, was the best known. Consisting of a stone foundation punctuated by seven gates, the fortress housed the emperor's palace and a ziggurat among massive load-bearing walls with regularly spaced towers.



Reconstruction of the palace of Sargon II at Dur-Sharrukin: Image shows the typical rectangular plan and massive fortified walls of Assyrian palace architecture.

Despite the intended political symbolism of Assyrian superiority, these fortified walls signify preparation for an attack by enemy invaders. Among the ornamental features excavated was a monumental lamassu outside the throne room. After the death of Sargon II, the site was abandoned.

Lamassu from Dur-Sharrukin

Nimrud

Lamassu figures abounded throughout the Assyrian Empire, featuring in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (reigned 883-859 BCE) at Nimrud. Reconstructions show that they adorned the gateways of the palace, including an entrance marked by a round arch . According to contemporaneous inscriptions, the palace consisted of wood from a diverse number of tree species, alabaster , limestone , and a variety of precious metals. As with Dur-Sharrukin, the palace of Ashurnasirpal II was surrounded by fortified load-bearing walls.

Balawat Gates

Builders increasingly used wood, particularly cedar and cypress, in architecture. As a result, much of the architecture has decayed, leaving archaeologists to produce reconstructions for present-day scholars. One example is the Balawat Gates, from the Assyrian outpost of Balawat, or Imgur-Enlil. Two sets were commissioned during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II and one addition set under the reign of his son Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE). Assyrian inscriptions suggest the gates were made of cedar. Experts estimate that the gates stood over 22 feet high. The metal bands that adorned the gates suggest that they measured 285 feet wide. Lacking hinges, the gates opened by turning enormous pine pillars that rotated in stone sockets. Despite the long-term fragility of wood, the scale of the gates and the mechanisms by which they opened and closed point to the political instability of the time and the need to defend all parts of the empire.

Reconstruction of the Balawat Gates at the British Museum: Woman in photograph provides an idea of the scale of the gates.

Artifacts of Assyria

Assyrian artifacts consist of a variety of media and range in size from hand-held to monumental.

Learning Objectives

Discuss artifacts that have been found from Assyria

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Assyrian Lion Weights and the Statue of Ashurnasirpal II represent rare examples of surviving Assyrian sculpture in the round .
- The Assyrian Lion Weights represent the importance of weights and measures and accommodation of more than one language.
- The Statue of Ashurnasirpal II, the lamassu reliefs , and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III provide examples of art rich in political and religious symbolism .
- The Statue of Ashurnasirpal II and the lamassu reliefs provide examples of royal hairstyles and beard lengths.

Key Terms

- **stylized**:Art that is not naturalistic, yet not distorted enough to be abstract.
- **sculpture in the round**:A free-standing object that is usually meant to be viewed from multiple angles.
- **relief**:A sculpture that projects from a background.

- **Obelisk**:Four-sided monument that tapers with height and is usually capped by a pyramidal form.
- **register**:A usually horizontal band on an artwork that divides designs into logical patterns.
- **bas relief**:A sculpture with minimal projection from its background.

Artifacts produced during the Assyrian Empire range from hand-held to monumental and consist of a variety of media , from clay to bronze to a diversity of stone. While reliefs comprise the majority of what archaeologists have found, existing sculptures in the round shed light on Assyrian numerical systems and politics.

Assyrian Lion Weights

Assyrian Lion Weights: These weights represented one of only two known systems of weights and measures in Mesopotamia at the time.

The Assyrian Lion Weights (800-700 BCE) are a group of solid bronze weights that range from two centimeters (approximately 0.8 inches) to 30 centimeters (approximately 12 inches). Admired as sculptures in the round today, the weights represent one of only two systems of weights and measures in the region at the time. This system was based on *heavy mina* (about one kilogram) and was used for weighting metals. Additionally, they bear inscriptions in Assyrian cuneiform and Phoenician script, indicating use by speakers of both languages. Eight lions in the set bear the only known inscriptions from the reign of Shalmaneser V (reigned 727-722 BCE).

Statue of Ashurnasirpal II

Statue of Ashurnasirpal II: The king's beard and hairstyle set him apart from his subjects. He holds a sickle as a form of mythological defense and a mace as a symbol of authority.

This magnesite (magnesium carbonate) sculpture of Ashurnasirpal II (9th century BCE) serves as a rare example of sculpture in the round produced during the Assyrian Empire. The kings stands stiffly with a sickle in his right hand (at his side) and a mace in his

left, which he holds to his torso. Both objects are symbolic; the sickle was used as a weapon against monsters, while the mace was a symbol of political and religious authority. The inscription on his chest announce his genealogy, titles, and military triumphs. Although the sculpture is stylized , it gives the viewer a glimpse into fashion norms for rulers at the time. The length of the king's hair and beard set him apart from commoners, who would have found such styles impractical.

Lamassu

Lamassu: Each lamassu figure faced a specific cardinal direction.

The lamassu was a mythological guardian figure with large wings, the head of a human, and the body of a lion or a bull. Originally a protective spirit to the households of Babylonian commoners, the lamassu was later adopted by Assyrian royalty to protect political and religious interests. In Assyrian sculpture, lamassu figures bear similar beards and hairstyles to those of Ashurnasirpal II in the sculpture discussed above. These monumental sculptures usually appeared in relief form in pairs at major entrances to cities, palaces, or fortresses. Each lamassu directed its gaze toward one of the cardinal directions, which explains why some look straight ahead and others have their heads turned.

Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III

Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III: This limestone obelisk contains 20 registers depicting conquered kings paying tribute to Assyrian power and celebrating the military campaigns of Shalmaneser III.

Erected during a time of civil war (825 BCE), the limestone Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III is the most intact Assyrian obelisk found to date. Each side consists of five registers of *bas* reliefs that celebrate the achievements of King Shalmaneser III (reigned

858-824 BCE). Three registers on each side focus on conquered kings from specific regions paying tribute to the Assyrian ruler. The registers at the top and bottom of each side bear an inscription from the annals of Shalmaneser III, celebrating his annual military campaigns.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 640px-Nineveh_north_palace_king_hunting_lion.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineveh#/media/File:Nineveh_north_palace_king_hunting_lion.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 568px-Palace_of_Khorsabad.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palace_of_Khorsabad.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lamassu. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lammasu.jpg#/media/File:Lammasu.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Portal Guardian from Nimroud.nBritish Museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Portal_Guardian_from_Nimroud._British_Museum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Black-obelisk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black-obelisk.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jehu-Obelisk-cropped. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jehu-Obelisk-cropped.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ziggurat. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ziggurat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sennacherib. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sennacherib. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Human headed winged bull profile. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Human_headed_winged_bull_profile.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nineveh. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineveh. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dur-Sharrukin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dur_Sharrukin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palace of Khorsabad. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sargon_II#/media/File:Palace_of_Khorsabad.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ishtar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ziggurat. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziggurat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-Assyrian Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Assyrian_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kalhu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalhu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Obelisk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Obelisk. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 501px-Human_headed_winged_bull_profile.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=54505. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sargon II palace.jpg. **Provided by**: Wiki Spaces. **Located at**: http://media.web.britannica.com/eb-media/41/2441-004-56D70C45.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 259px-Balawat_Gates.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Balawat_Gates.jpg#/media/File:Balawat_Gates.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Assyrian Art. **Provided by**: Wiki Spaces. **Located at**: mesopotamiadiv1.wikispaces.com/The+Art+of+Assyria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashurnasirpal II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurnasirpal_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shalmaneser III. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalmaneser_III. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Dur-Sharrukin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dur-Sharrukin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nimrud. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nimrud. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Balawat Gates. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Balawat_Gates. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Mesopotamia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Mesopotamia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Assyria. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sargon II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sargon_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Assyrian_lions.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Assyrian_lions.png#/media/File:Assyrian_lions.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Black-obelisk.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black-obelisk.jpg#/media/File:Black-obelisk.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 196px-Assyria_King_Statue_BM_(2).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Assyria_King_Statue_BM_(2).jpg#/media/File:Assyria_King_Statue_BM_(2).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 501px-Human_headed_winged_bull_profile.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=54505. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lamassu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamassu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shalmaneser V. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalmaneser_V. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Obelisk_of_Shalmaneser_III. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Obelisk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Obelisk. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Statue of Ashurnasirpal II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Ashurnasirpal_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Assyrian Lion Weights. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_lion_weights. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 3.2: Assyria is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.3: Neo-Babylonia

Neo-Babylonia

The Neo-Babylonian Empire developed an artistic style motivated by their ancient Mesopotamian heritage.

Learning Objectives

Describe the artistic and architectural accomplishments of King Nebuchadnezzar II, including the city of Babylon

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Neo-Babylonian Empire was a civilization in Mesopotamia between 626 BCE and 539 BCE. During the preceding three centuries, Babylonia had been ruled by the Akkadians and Assyrians, but threw off the yoke of external domination after the death of the last strong Assyrian ruler.
- Neo-Babylonian art and architecture reached its zenith under King Nebuchadnezzar II, who ruled from 604–562 BC. He was a great patron of art and urban development and rebuilt the city of Babylon to reflect its ancient glory.
- Most of the evidence for Neo-Babylonian art and architecture is literary. Of the material evidence that survives, the most important fragments are from the Ishtar Gate of Babylon.
- Neo-Babylonians were known for their colorful glazed bricks, which they shaped into bas-reliefs of dragons, lions, and aurochs to decorate the Ishtar Gate.

Key Terms

- **glazed**:Having a vitreous coating whose primary purposes are decoration or protection.
- **aurochs**:An extinct European mammal, Bos primigenius, the ancestor of domestic cattle.
- **ziggurat**:A temple tower of the ancient Mesopotamian valley, having the form of a terraced pyramid of successively receding stories.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire, also known as the Chaldean Empire, was a civilization in Mesopotamia that began in 626 BC and ended in 539 BC.

During the preceding three centuries, Babylonia had been ruled by the Akkadians and Assyrians, but threw off the yoke of external domination after the death of Assurbanipal, the last strong Assyrian ruler. The Neo-Babylonian period was a renaissance that witnessed a great flourishing of art, architecture, and science.

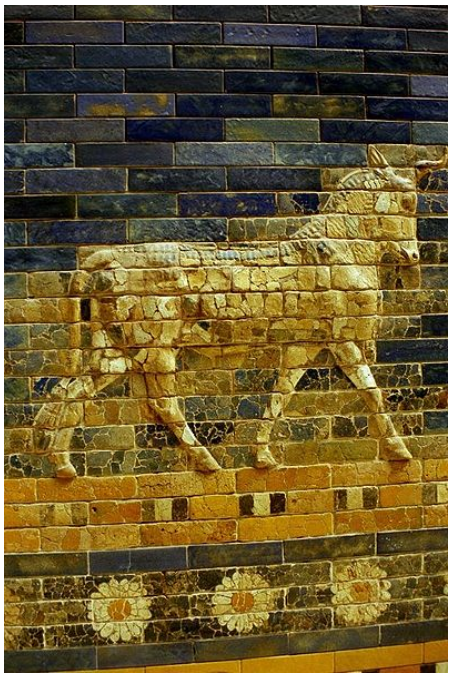
The Neo-Babylonian rulers were motivated by the antiquity of their heritage and followed a traditionalist cultural policy, based on the ancient Sumero-Akkadian culture . Ancient artworks from the Old-Babylonian period were painstakingly restored and preserved, and treated with a respect verging on religious reverence. Neo-Babylonian art and architecture reached its zenith under King Nebuchadnezzar II, who ruled from 604–562 BC and was a great patron of urban development, bent on rebuilding all of Babylonia's cities to reflect their former glory.

It was Nebuchadnezzar II's vision and sponsorship that turned Babylon into the immense and beautiful city of legend. The city spread over three square miles, surrounded by moats and ringed by a double circuit of walls. The river Euphrates, which flowed through the city, was spanned by a beautiful stone bridge. At the heart of the city lay the *zigguratEtemenanki*, literally "temple of the foundation of heaven and earth." Originally seven stories high, it is believed to have provided the inspiration for the biblical story of the Tower of Babel.

It was also during this period that Nebuchadnezzar supposedly built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, although there is no definitive archeological evidence to establish their precise location. Ancient Greek and Roman writers describe the gardens in vivid detail. However, the lack of physical ruins have led many experts to speculate whether the Hanging Gardens existed at all. If this is the case, writers might have been describing ideal mythologized Eastern gardens or a famous garden built by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) at Nineveh roughly a century earlier. If the Hanging Gardens did exist, they were likely destroyed around the first century CE.

19th-century reconstruction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon: Two lamassu sculptures in the round face each other in the foreground, while another reconstruction of the ziggurat Etemenanki dominates the background.

Most of the evidence for Neo-Babylonian art and architecture is literary. The material evidence itself is mostly fragmentary. Some of the most important fragments that survive are from the Ishtar Gate, the eighth gate to the inner city of Babylon. It was constructed in 575 BC by order of Nebuchadnezzar II, using glazed brick with alternating rows of bas-relief dragons and aurochs. Dedicated to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, it was a double gate, and its roofs and doors were made of cedar, according to the dedication plaque. Babylon's Processional Way, which was lined with brilliantly colorful glazed brick walls decorated with lions, ran through the middle of the gate. Statues of the Babylonian gods were paraded through the gate and down the Processional Way during New Year's celebrations.



Ishtar Gate detail: An aurochs above a flower ribbon with missing tiles filled in (Ishtar Gate bas-relief, housed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin). A prominent characteristic of Neo-Babylonian art and architecture was the use of brilliantly colorful glazed bricks.

The reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way, built at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin in 1930, features material excavated from the original site. To compensate for missing pieces, museum staff created new bricks in a specially designed kiln that was able to match the original color and finish. Other parts of the gate, which include glazed brick lions and dragons, are housed in different museums around the world.

Ishtar Gate at Pergamon Museum: This was reconstructed in Berlin in 1930, using materials excavated from the original build-site.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/a/ae/Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ish-tar Gate detail. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ish-tar_Gate_detail.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fotothek df ps 0002470 Innenru00e4ume ^ Ausstellungsgebu00e4ude. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fotothek_df_ps_0002470_Innenr%C3%A4ume_%5E_Ausstellungsgeb%C3%A4ude.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-Babylonian Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Babylonian_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hanging Gardens of Babylon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aurochs. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aurochs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ishtar Gate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar_Gate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/glazed. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ziggurat. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ziggurat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 3.3: Neo-Babylonia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.4: Persia

Art of the Persian Empire

The art of the Persian Empire combined a diversity of styles from other cultures to create a unique Persian style.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the art produced at the beginning of the Persian Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Assyria, ancient Egypt, and Mycenae are three of many cultures whose styles feature in Persian art.
- Gold and silver objects demonstrate advanced skill in metalworking among artists living in the Persian Empire.
- Multilingual inscriptions, such as those on a relief of Cyrus the Great, demonstrate the diversity of those living in the Persian Empire.

Key Terms

- **rhyton**:A large ceremonial drinking cup fashioned in the shape of an animal's head.
- **syncretic**:Art that bears the style(s), themes, or other attributes of more than one culture.
- **stylized**:Art that is not naturalistic but not distorted enough to be abstract.

Persia, centered around present-day Iran, was the site of a vast empire that existed in three general phases. The Achaemenids (550–330 BCE) established the first Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great, who quickly expanded the empire's borders. Zoroastrianism , an ancient monotheistic religion, dominated the Persian Empire until Islam supplanted it in the seventh century CE. While the religion was unique, the art of the empire was largely syncretic , combining the styles of diverse conquered and neighboring peoples. The result was a new, unique Persian style.

Early Persian Empire: In the Achaemenid period, the Persian Empire stretched across a vast swath of the Middle East into northern Africa and southern Europe.

Metalworking

One artistic technique incorporated from other cultures involved the smithing and hammering of gold, possibly adopted from the Medes. The most common surviving metal objects are ceremonial drinking cups called rhyta made of gold and silver. Rhyta were used in prehistoric Aegean and Greek cultures, most notably the Mycenaeans in the sixteenth century BCE. The gold rhyton below, which bears a stylized ram's head in relief, dates to the Achaemenid period.

Gold rhyton (550–330 BCE)

Better known than ceremonial rhyta is the Oxus Treasure, a 180-piece trove of reliefs, figurines , jewelry, and coins made of gold and silver. The treasure is important because it demonstrates the variety of forms in which metal was worked during the early Persian Empire. The gold chariot below demonstrates the precision possible with small sculptures and includes a small votive based on the Egyptian god Bes.

Gold chariot from Oxus Treasure, amalgamated from fragments of other objects in the trove

The griffin-headed bracelet also found in the treasure was once inlaid with enamel and precious stones. Once thought to have originated with the ancient Egyptians, the manner of goldsmithing evident in the amulet was later found in Assyrian art. The style of the animals originated with the Scythians, who inhabited the Steppes of Russia.

Bracelet from the Oxus Treasure: Indentations show where the bracelet once held enamel and stone inlay.

Cyrus the Great

Persian art incorporated not only the styles of conquered peoples but also their languages. A large *bas* relief representing Cyrus the Great as a four-winged guardian figure proclaims his rank and ethnicity as an Achaemenidian in three languages. The stylized profile pose in which the king stands recalls the dominant Egyptian style of depicting the human body in art.

Cyrus the Great as a winged guardian figure: This stylized relief of Cyrus borrows from the Egyptian style of depicting the human body and proclaims the king's ethnicity and rank in three languages.

Cyrus is believed to have died in December 530 BCE and was interred in a tomb that further demonstrates the syncretism of Persian art. The load-bearing tomb, pyramidal-roofed, sits atop a geometric mound that resembles a stepped pyramid of Pre-Dynastic Egypt. Despite the razing of the original city centuries ago, the tomb remains largely intact.

Tomb of Cyrus the Great: Syncretic attributes include the pyramidal base of the tomb.

Art and Architecture of the Achaemenid Empire

The Achaemenid Empire was known for its eclectic style of art and architecture synthesized from many foreign influences between 550 and 330 BCE.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Achaemenid art and architecture in the Persian Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Achaemenid Empire stretched across western Asia from the Indus Valley in the east to Thrace and Macedon in the west.

- The quintessential characteristic of Persian art and architecture is its eclectic nature, combining elements of Median, Assyrian, and Asiatic Greek styles .
- The Achaemenid Persians were particularly skilled at constructing complex frieze reliefs , crafting precious metals, and glazed brick masonry. They also constructed spectacular cities for governance and habitation, temples for worship and social gatherings, and mausoleums honoring fallen kings.
- The ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire was Persepolis, which preserves the best of ancient Persian architecture. It is best known for its pillared Apadana Hall, decorated with complex sculptural reliefs depicting the king and his subjects.
- The palace at Persepolis stood for nearly 200 years until it was looted and burned by the armies of Alexander the Great in 330 BCE.

Key Terms

- **hypostyle**:Having a roof supported on a row of columns.
- **immortal**:A member of an elite regiment of the Persian army.
- **fluted**:Having semicylindrical vertical grooves, either for decoration or to trim weight.
- **capital**:The topmost part of a column.
- **frieze**:Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

Ancient Persian art developed and flourished under the Achaemenid Persian Empire (550–330 BCE), an Iranian empire in Western Asia, which eventually came to rule the ancient world from the Indus Valley in the east to Thrace and Macedon in the west.

Not only was the Achaemenid Dynasty militarily and politically influential, but it also left a long-lasting social and cultural legacy throughout its vast realms. Among its greatest cultural achievements was the development of Achaemenid art and architecture, which were intimately intertwined, reflected techniques and influences from the many corners of its huge empire, and synthesized different styles to develop a unique Persian style.

Decorative frieze from the palace of Darius the Great at Susa, ca. 510 BCE: Decorative panels from the terra-cotta griffins' frieze. The vivid colors were preserved, thanks to the ruins being buried underground and protected from the elements.

The Achaemenid Persians were particularly skilled at constructing complex frieze reliefs; crafting precious metals into jewelry, vessels , statuettes, and a myriad of other shapes; glazed brick masonry; decorating palaces; and creating gardens. They also constructed spectacular cities for governance and habitation, temples for worship and social gatherings, and mausoleums honoring fallen kings. The quintessential characteristic of Persian art and architecture is its eclectic nature, combining elements of Median, Assyrian, and Asiatic Greek styles.

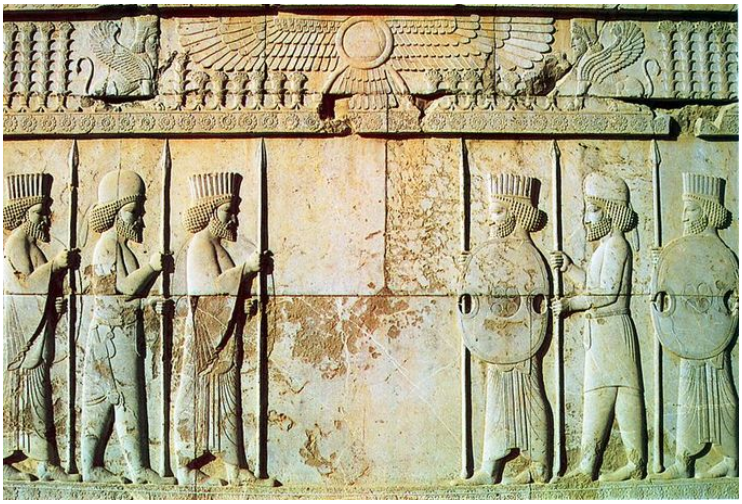
Persepolis

The extraordinary architectural legacy of the Achaemenids is best seen in the ruins of the opulent city of Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. Located about 70 kilometers northeast of the modern Iranian city of Shiraz, Persepolis is a wide, elevated complex 40 feet high, 100 feet wide, and a third of a mile long.

Persepolis: A panoramic view of its ruins.

It consists of multiple halls, corridors, a wide terrace, and a symmetrical double stairway providing access to the terrace, decorated with reliefs depicting scenes from nature and daily life. The largest hall in the complex is the audience hall of Apadana. This hypostyle hall has a total of 36 fluted columns with capitals sculpted into unique forms . It famously features the exquisite "Treasure Reliefs"—friezes emphasizing the divine presence and power of the king and depicting scenes from all across his vast empire and his army of Persian immortals .

The construction of Persepolis was initiated by Darius I (550–486 BCE), who also commissioned the construction of a grand palace in the city of Susa. The palace featured imperial art on an entirely unprecedented scale. Materials and artists were drawn from all corners of the empire to work on it. Styles, tastes, and motifs intermingled in a lavish expression of the hybrid art and architecture that was characteristic of the Persian Achaemenid style. This attention to diversity also appears in the reliefs from the hall of Apadana, in which leaders and dignitaries from various provinces appear in regional fashions beneath a frieze punctuated by male lamassus adopted from previous Mesopotamian cultures .



Relief from Apadana Hall, Persepolis: Features 5th century BC carving of Persian and Median soldiers in traditional costume. Note the subtle differences in the clothing and style of the soldiers on each side. The Medians are wearing rounded hats and boots.

The palace at Persepolis stood for nearly 200 years. In 330 BCE, the Macedonian emperor Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) captured the city and allowed his troops to loot the palace. Inscriptions describe a great fire that engulfed "the palace" but do not specify which palace. Scholars believe these writings describe the destruction of Persepolis, based on the condition of the ruins found there. The fire likely started in the living quarters of the former emperor Xerxes I (518–465 BCE) and spread throughout the rest of the city. This event brought an end to the Achaemenid Empire and made Persepolis a Macedonian province.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Early Empire.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Empire#/media/File:Achaemenid_(greatest_extent).svg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Rython_boz.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rython_boz.jpg#/media/File:Rython_boz.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 632px-Oxus_chariot_model.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oxus_chariot_model.jpg#/media/File:Oxus_chariot_model.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 480px-Armlet_from_the_Oxus_Treasure_BM_1897.12-31.116.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Armlet_from_the_Oxus_Treasure_BM_1897.12-31.116.jpg#/media/File:Armlet_from_the_Oxus_Treasure_BM_1897.12-31.116.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Pasargades_winged_man.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pasargades_winged_man.jpg#/media/File:Pasargades_winged_man.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Tomb_of_Cyrus_the_Great.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_of_Cyrus_the_Great.jpg#/media/File:Tomb_of_Cyrus_the_Great.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Persian Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zoroastrianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oxus Treasure. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxus_Treasure. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Persian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenaean Greece. **Provided by**: Wikpedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenaean_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cyrus the Great. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Achaemenid Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rhyton. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhyton. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 2009-11-24 Persepolis 02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2009-11-24_Persepolis_02.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Decorative motives2 griffins frieze Louvre Sb3323. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Decorative_motives2_griffins_frieze_Louvre_Sb3323.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Persepolis The Persian Soldiers. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Persepolis_The_Persian_Soldiers.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Achaemenid Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xerxes I. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes_I. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Alexander the Great. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Persepolis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Persepolis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Achaemenid architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- frieze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/frieze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- hypostyle. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hypostyle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/fluted. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- immortal. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/immortal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 3.4: Persia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Ancient Egyptian Art

4.1: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art
4.2: The Early Dynastic Period
4.3: The Old Kingdom
4.4: The Middle Kingdom
4.5: The New Kingdom
4.6: Late Egyptian Art

This page titled 4: Ancient Egyptian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.1: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art

Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art

Ancient Egyptian art is the painting, sculpture, and architecture produced by the civilization in the Nile Valley from 5000 BCE to 300 CE.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline of ancient Egyptian civilization, marking the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ancient Egyptian art reached considerable sophistication in painting and sculpture , and was both highly stylized and symbolic.
- The Nile River, with its predictable flooding and abundant natural resources, allowed the ancient Egyptian civilization to thrive sustainably and culturally. Much of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments; hence, the emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past. In a narrower sense, Ancient Egyptian art refers to the second and third dynasty art developed in Egypt from 3000 BCE and used until the third century.
- Most elements of Egyptian art remained remarkably stable over this 3,000 year period, with relatively little outside influence.

Key Terms

- **wadi**:A valley, gully, or stream bed in northern Africa and southwest Asia that remains dry except during the rainy season.
- **Ancient Egypt**:A civilization that existed in the valley of the Nile River from 3150 BC to 30 BC. Noted for building the Great Pyramids of Giza.
- **pyramid**:An ancient massive construction with a square or rectangular base and four triangular sides meeting in an apex, such as those built as tombs in Egypt or as bases for temples in Mesoamerica.

Ancient Egyptian art includes the painting, sculpture, architecture, and other arts produced by the civilization in the lower Nile Valley from 5000 BCE to 300 CE. Ancient Egyptian art reached considerable sophistication in painting and sculpture, and was both highly stylized and symbolic. Much of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments; hence, the emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past. In a narrower sense, Ancient Egyptian art refers to art of the second and third dynasty developed in Egypt from 3000 BCE until the third century. Most elements of Egyptian art remained remarkably stable over this 3,000 year period, with relatively little outside influence. The quality of observation and execution began at a high level and remained so throughout the period.

Ancient Egypt was able to flourish because of its location on the Nile River, which floods at predictable intervals, allowing controlled irrigation, and providing nutrient-rich soil favorable to agriculture. Most of the population and cities of Egypt lie along those parts of the Nile valley north of Aswan, and nearly all the cultural and historical sites of Ancient Egypt are found along riverbanks. The Nile ends in a large delta that empties into the Mediterranean Sea. The settlers of the area were able to eventually produce a surplus of edible crops, which in turn led to a growth in the population. The regular flooding and ebbing of the river is also responsible for the diverse natural resources in the region.

Natural resources in the Nile Valley during the rise of ancient Egypt included building and decorative stone, copper and lead ores, gold, and semiprecious stones, all of which contributed to the architecture, monuments, jewels, and other art forms for which this civilization would become well known. High-quality building stones were abundant. The ancient Egyptians quarried limestone all along the Nile Valley, granite from Aswan, and basalt and sandstone from the wadis (valleys) of the eastern desert. Deposits of decorative stones dotted the eastern desert and were collected early in Egyptian history.

The Prehistory of Egypt spans the period of earliest human settlement to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt in ca. 3100 BCE, beginning with King Menes/Narmer. The Predynastic Period is traditionally equivalent to the Neolithic period,

beginning ca. 6000 BCE and including the Protodynastic Period (Naqada III). The Predynastic period is generally divided into cultural periods, each named after the place where a certain type of Egyptian settlement was first discovered. However, the same gradual development that characterizes the Protodynastic period is present throughout the entire Predynastic period, and individual "cultures" must not be interpreted as separate entities but as largely subjective divisions used to facilitate the study of the entire period.

Old Kingdom

The Old Kingdom is the name given to the period in the third millennium BCE when Egypt attained its first continuous peak of civilization in complexity and achievement—the first of three so-called "Kingdom" periods which mark the high points of civilization in the lower Nile Valley (the others being Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom). While the Old Kingdom was a period of internal security and prosperity, it was followed by a period of disunity and relative cultural decline referred to by Egyptologists as the First Intermediate Period. During the Old Kingdom, the king of Egypt (not called the Pharaoh until the New Kingdom) became a living god, who ruled absolutely and could demand the services and wealth of his subjects. Under King Djoser, the first king of the Third Dynasty of the Old Kingdom, the royal capital of Egypt was moved to Memphis. A new era of building was initiated at Saqqara under his reign. King Djoser's architect, Imhotep, is credited with the development of building with stone and with the conception of the new architectural form—the Step Pyramid . Indeed, the Old Kingdom is perhaps best known for the large number of pyramids constructed at this time as pharaonic burial places. For this reason, the Old Kingdom is frequently referred to as "the Age of the Pyramids."

Djoser pyramid: Step pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, Egypt.

Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom of Egypt is the period in the history of ancient Egypt stretching from the establishment of the Eleventh Dynasty to the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty, between 2055 and 1650 BCE. During this period, the funerary cult of Osiris rose to dominate Egyptian popular religion.

Osiris: The gods Osiris, Anubis, and Horus, from a tomb painting.

New Kingdom

The New Kingdom of Egypt, also referred to as the Egyptian Empire, is the period between the sixteenth century and the eleventh century BCE, covering the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Dynasties of Egypt. The New Kingdom followed the Second Intermediate Period and was succeeded by the Third Intermediate Period. It was Egypt's most prosperous time and marked the peak of its power.

The Ptolemaic dynasty was a Macedonian Greek royal family which ruled the Ptolemaic Empire in Egypt during the Hellenistic period. Their rule lasted for 275 years, from 305 BCE to 30 BCE. They were the last dynasty of ancient Egypt.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Saqqara BW 5. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Saqqara_BW_5.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- La Tombe de Horemheb cropped. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:La_Tombe_de_Horemheb_cropped.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Ptolemaic dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemaic_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Late Period of ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Period_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Third Intermediate Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Intermediate_Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Amarna art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Predynastic Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Predynastic_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ancient Egyptian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Old Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pyramid. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pyramid. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nile River. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_river. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 4.1: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.2: The Early Dynastic Period

Art in the Early Dynastic Period

The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian civilization, such as art, architecture and religion, took shape during the Early Dynastic Period.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the common aesthetic practices in the Early Dynastic Period of Egyptian art, including the use of symbolism and color

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Early Dynastic Period of Egypt immediately followed the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt around 3100 BC, and is generally taken to include the First and Second Dynasties .
- Ancient Egyptian art forms depicted gods, human beings, heroic battles, and nature, and were intended to provide solace in the afterlife; many of the common aesthetic practices were formalized during the Early Dynastic Period.
- Much of Egyptian art revolved around the theme of permanence, as artists endeavored to preserve everything from the present as clearly and permanently as possible.
- Symbolism , ranging from the pharaoh's regalia (signifying his power to maintain order) to depictions of goddesses, gods, and animals, is omnipresent in Egyptian art. Colors also served symbolic purposes to suggest concepts such as youth, royalty, or divinity.
- The first mastabas were constructed as burial sites for eminent Egyptians and became models for the Step Pyramids that would be developed later in the Old Kingdom.

Key Terms

- **pictographs (hieroglyphics)**:An ideogram that conveys its meaning through its pictorial resemblance to a physical object; often used in writing and graphic systems.
- **mastaba**:A rectangular structure with a flat top and slightly sloping sides, built during Ancient Egyptian times above tombs that were situated on flat land.

The Early Dynastic Period of Egypt immediately followed the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt around 3100 BC. It is generally taken to include the First and Second Dynasties, lasting from the Protodynastic Period of Egypt until about 2686 BC, or the beginning of the Old Kingdom.

During the First Dynasty, the capital moved from Abydos to Memphis, with a unified Egypt ruled by an Egyptian god-king. Abydos remained the major holy land in the south. Before the unification of Egypt, the land was settled with autonomous villages. With the early dynasties, and for much of Egypt's history thereafter, the country came to be known as the Two Lands, and the rulers established a national administration and appointed royal governors. The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian civilization , such as art, architecture and many aspects of their polytheistic religion, took shape during the Early Dynastic period.

Many of the common aesthetic practices of Egyptian art and architecture were formalized during this era, as Egyptian society grew and advanced rapidly toward refined civilization. Much of Egyptian art revolved around the theme of permanence, from large architectural structures to writing and imagery of the afterlife. Artists endeavored to preserve everything from the present as clearly and permanently as possible.

A new and distinctive pottery appeared during this time, along with the use of copper, the Mesopotamian process of sun-dried bricks, and architectural building principles such as the arch and decorative recessed walls. Ceramic objects were commonly interred with the dead in tombs. Mundane objects such as plates ensured the continuation of activities practiced in the physical world, while other vessels stored the internal organs of the body after it was embalmed. Open-air temple buildings of the central government were constructed of wood or sandstone.

Ceramic plate (c. 3900 BCE): This is a plate from the Early Dynastic Period of Ancient Egypt. It depicts a man on a boat alongside a hippopotamus and crocodile. In this context, the hippopotamus probably symbolizes chaos and destruction in the form of the god Seth (Set), while the crocodile could symbolize the god Sobek, who occasionally served as a protective deity.

It was also during this period that the Egyptian writing system was further developed: Initially composed of a few symbols, by the end of the third dynasty, it had been expanded to include more than 200 symbols, both phonograms and ideograms.

Sunken relief of the crocodile god, Sobek: Animals were usually also highly symbolic figures in Egyptian art.

While funeral practices for peasants remained much the same as in predynastic times, wealthier members of Egyptian society began seeking something more. The first mastabas were constructed in the form of a flat-roofed, rectangular structure with outward sloping sides that marked the burial site of many eminent Egyptians. These structures became models for the Step Pyramids that would be developed later in the Old Kingdom.

Symbolism is omnipresent in Egyptian art, and played an important role in establishing a sense of order. Symbols ranged from the pharaoh's regalia (signifying his power to maintain order), to the individual symbols of Egyptian gods and goddesses, to animals depicted as highly symbolic figures. The crocodile god Sobek, depicted in the sunken relief below (and possibly in the imagery of the plate above), served a variety of purposes including fertility, military prowess, and protection. On the other hand, the god Seth (also known as Set), sometimes symbolized by a hippopotamus, symbolized chaos and disorder.

Colors were more expressive rather than natural. For instance, red skin painted on characters implied vigorous, tanned youths; yellow skin was used for women or middle-aged men who worked indoors; blue or gold indicated divinity because of its unnatural appearance and association with precious materials; and the use of black for royal figures expressed the fertility of the Nile from which Egypt was born. Stereotypes were employed to indicate the geographical origins of foreigners.

Art forms were characterized by regularity and detailed depiction of gods, human beings, heroic battles, and nature, and were intended to provide solace to the deceased in the afterlife. Media ranged from papyrus drawings to pictographs (hieroglyphics) and included funerary sculpture carved in relief and in the round from sandstone, quartz diorite, and granite. The art displays an extraordinarily vivid representation of the Ancient Egyptian's socioeconomic status and belief systems.

Architecture of the Early Dynastic Period

The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian architecture took shape during the Early Dynastic Period.

Learning Objectives

Describe the building materials and characteristics of Egyptian architecture during the Early Dynastic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Due to the scarcity of wood, the two predominant building materials used in ancient Egypt were sun-baked mud brick and limestone .
- Ancient Egyptian houses were made of mud collected from the Nile River. The mud was placed in molds and left to dry in the hot sun to harden.
- Ancient Egyptian temples were aligned with astronomically significant events like solstices and equinoxes, requiring precise measurements at the moment of the particular event.
- Large tombs of pharaohs at Abydos and Naqada, in addition to cemeteries at Saqqara and Helwan near Memphis, reveal structures built largely of wood and mud bricks, with some small use of stone for walls and floors.
- Human sacrifice was practiced as part of the funerary rituals associated with all of the pharaohs of the first dynasty and is clearly demonstrated by retainers being buried near each pharaoh's tomb.

Key Terms

- **Early Dynastic Period**:The period in Egyptian history immediately following the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt, c. 3100 BC; generally taken to include the First and Second Dynasties.
- **tenon**:A projecting member left by cutting away the wood around it, and made to insert into a mortise, and in this way secure together the parts of a frame.

First and Second Dynasties

Due to the scarcity of wood, the two predominant building materials used in ancient Egypt were sun-baked mud brick and limestone. After the end of the Early Dynastic Period , stone became used in tombs and temples, while bricks were used even for royal palaces, fortresses, and the walls of temple precincts.

Ancient Egyptian houses were made of mud collected from the Nile River. The mud was placed in molds and left to dry in the hot sun to harden. Many Egyptian towns situated near the cultivated area of the Nile Valley have disappeared, either by flooding as the river bed slowly rose during the millennia, or the mud bricks of which they were built were used by peasants as fertilizer. Fortunately, the dry, hot climate of Egypt preserved some mud brick structures.

Large tombs of pharaohs at Abydos and Naqada, in addition to cemeteries at Saqqara and Helwan near Memphis, reveal structures built largely of wood and mud bricks, with some small use of stone for walls and floors. Stone was used in quantity for the manufacture of ornaments , vessels , and occasionally for statues. Tamarix was used to build boats such as the Abydos Boats. One of the most important indigenous woodworking techniques was the fixed mortise and tenon joint, where xed tenon was made by shaping the end of one timber to fit into a mortise (or hole) that is cut into a second timber. A variation of this joint using a free tenon eventually became one of the most important features in Mediterranean and Egyptian shipbuilding. It creates a union

between two planks or other components by inserting a separate tenon into a cavity (mortise) of the corresponding size cut into each component.

The stepped pyramid at Saqqara: Large tombs of pharaohs at Abydos and Naqada, in addition to cemeteries at Saqqara and Helwan near Memphis, reveal structures built largely of wood and mud bricks, with some small use of stone for walls and floors.

Tombs and Funerary Practices

Human sacrifice was practiced as part of the funerary rituals associated with all of the pharaohs of the first dynasty. It is clearly demonstrated as existing during this dynasty by retainers being buried near each pharaoh's tomb as well as animals sacrificed for the burial. The tomb of Djer is associated with the burials of 338 individuals. The people and animals sacrificed, such as donkeys, were expected to assist the pharaoh in the afterlife. For unknown reasons, this practice ended with the conclusion of the dynasty, with *shabtis* taking the place of actual people to aid the pharaohs with the work expected of them in the afterlife.

Ancient Egyptian temples were aligned with astronomically significant events like solstices and equinoxes, requiring precise measurements at the moment of the particular event. Measurements at the most significant temples may have been ceremonially undertaken by the pharaoh himself.

Painting of the Early Dynastic Period

The Early Dynastic Period of Ancient Egypt reached a high level in painting and sculpture that was both highly stylized and symbolic.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of painting and sculpture during the Early Dynastic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Much of the surviving art of the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt comes from tombs and monuments, and thus there is an emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past.
- All Egyptian reliefs were painted, and less prestigious works in tombs, temples, and palaces were just painted on a flat surface.
- Egyptian paintings are painted in such a way to show a profile view and a side view of the animal or person, a technique known as composite view.
- The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunk relief , which is well suited to very bright sunlight.
- By Dynasty IV (2680–2565 BCE) at the latest, the idea of the Ka statue was firmly established. These were put in tombs as a resting place for the *ka* portion of the soul.

Key Terms

- **relief**:A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.
- **Ka statue**:A type of ancient Egyptian statue intended to provide a resting place for the ka, or spirit, of the person after death. The ancient Egyptians believed the ka (or life-force), along with the physical body, the name, the ba (personality or soul), and the šwt (shadow) made up the five aspects of a person.

Ancient Egyptian art reached a high level in painting and sculpture , and was both highly stylized and symbolic. Much of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments, and thus there is an emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past.

Painting

All Egyptian reliefs were painted, and less prestigious works in tombs, temples, and palaces were just painted on a flat surface. Stone surfaces were prepared by whitewash, or, if rough, a layer of coarse mud plaster, with a smoother gesso layer above; some finer limestones could take paint directly. Pigments were mostly mineral, chosen to withstand strong sunlight without fading. The binding medium used in painting remains unclear; egg tempera and various gums and resins have been suggested. It is clear that true fresco , painted into a thin layer of wet plaster, was not used. Instead the paint was applied to dried plaster, in what is called *fresco a secco* in Italian. After painting, a varnish or resin was usually applied as a protective coating, and many paintings with some exposure to the elements have survived remarkably well, although those on fully exposed walls rarely have. Small objects including wooden statuettes were often painted using similar techniques.

Many ancient Egyptian paintings have survived due to Egypt’s extremely dry climate. The paintings were often made with the intent of making a pleasant afterlife for the deceased. The themes included journey through the afterworld or protective deities introducing the deceased to the gods of the underworld (such as Osiris). Some tomb paintings show activities that the deceased were involved in when they were alive and wished to carry on doing for eternity. Egyptian paintings are painted in such a way to show a profile view and a side view of the animal or person—a technique known as composite view. Their main colors were red, blue, black, gold, and green.

Wall painting of Nefertari: Egyptian paintings are painted in such a way to show a profile view and a side view of the animal or person. This painting, for example, shows the head from a profile view and the body from a frontal view. The main colors used were red, blue, black, gold, and green.

Sculpture

The monumental sculpture of Ancient Egypt is world famous, but refined and delicate small works exist in much greater numbers. The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunk relief, which is well suited to very bright sunlight. The main figures in reliefs adhere to the same figure convention as in painting, with parted legs (where not seated) and head shown from the side, but the torso from the front, and a standard set of proportions making up the figure, using 18 “fists” to go from the ground to the hair-line on the forehead. This appears as early as the Narmer Palette from Dynasty I, but elsewhere the convention is not used for minor figures shown engaged in some activity, such as the captives and corpses. Other conventions make statues of males darker than females. Very conventionalized portrait statues appear from as early as Dynasty II (before 2,780 BCE), and, with the exception of the art of the Amarna period of Ahkenaten and some other periods such as Dynasty XII, the idealized features of rulers changed little until after the Greek conquest.

A sculpted head of Amenhotep III: Very conventionalized portrait statues manifest idealized features of rulers.

By Dynasty IV (2680–2565 BCE) at the latest, the idea of the Ka statue was firmly established. These were put in tombs as a resting place for the *ka* portion of the soul. The so-called reserve heads, or plain hairless heads, are especially naturalistic, though the extent to which there was real portraiture in Ancient Egypt is still debated.

Early tombs also contained small models of the slaves, animals, buildings and objects – such as boats necessary for the deceased to continue his lifestyle in the afterworld – and later Ushabti figures. However, the great majority of wooden sculpture has been lost to decay, or probably used as fuel. Small figures of deities, or their animal personifications, are commonly found in popular materials such as pottery . There were also large numbers of small carved objects, from figures of the gods to toys and carved utensils. Alabaster was often used for expensive versions of these, while painted wood was the most common material, normally used for the small models of animals, slaves, and possessions that were placed in tombs to provide for the afterlife.

Very strict conventions were followed while crafting statues, and specific rules governed the appearance of every Egyptian god. For example, the sky god (Horus) was essentially to be represented with a falcon's head, while the god of funeral rites (Anubis) was to be always shown with a jackal's head. Artistic works were ranked according to their compliance with these conventions, and the conventions were followed so strictly that, over three thousand years, the appearance of statues changed very little. These conventions were intended to convey the timeless and non-aging quality of the figure's *ka*.

Sculpture of the Early Dynastic Period

The small-scale sculptures of the Early Dynastic Period in ancient Egypt provide insight into the foundations of Egyptian customs and the unification of the country.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the characteristics of sculpture during the Early Dynastic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Many conventions of ancient Egyptian sculpture developed during the Early Dynastic period.
- The sculpture of Early Dynastic Egypt consisted of small objects carved in the round , in sunken relief , and in low relief.
- The small-scale El-Amra clay model of cattle provides an example of typical tomb sculptures of Early Dynastic Egypt.
- The rich detail of the Palette of Narmer provides an artistic interpretation of the unification of Egypt.

Key Terms

- **hieratic scale**:A manner of depicting figures' sizes as relative to their importance.

The monumental sculpture of Ancient Egypt is world famous, but refined and delicate small works exist in much greater numbers. The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunken relief, which is well suited to very bright sunlight. The main figures in reliefs adhere to the same figure convention as in painting, with parted legs (where not seated) and head shown from the side, but the torso from the front, and a standard set of proportions making up the figure, using 18 "fists" to go from the ground to the hair-line on the forehead. This appears as early as the Narmer Palette from Dynasty I (c. 31st century BCE), but there, as elsewhere, the convention is not used for minor figures shown engaged in some activity, such as the captives and corpses. Other conventions make statues of males darker than females. Very conventionalized portrait statues appear from as early as Dynasty II (before 2,780 BCE).

Early tombs contained small sculptural models of the slaves, animals, buildings, and objects, such as boats necessary for the deceased to continue his lifestyle in the afterlife, and later Ushabti figures. However, the great majority of wooden sculpture has been lost to decay, or probably used as fuel. Small figures of deities, or their animal personifications, are commonly found in popular materials such as pottery. There were also large numbers of small carved objects, from figures of the gods to toys and carved utensils. Alabaster was often used for expensive versions of these, while painted wood was the most common material, normally used for the small models of animals, slaves, and possessions that were placed in tombs to provide for the afterlife.

Tomb Sculpture

The El-Amra clay model of cattle (c. 3500 BCE) predates the Early Dynastic Period but provides an idea of the appearance and production method of tomb sculptures of the time. Cattle more commonly represented a source of blood, rather than meat or dairy products, but likely symbolized a source of food in the afterlife. The model is small scale (8.2 cm high), was fired at a low temperature, and was originally painted. Remnants of linen on the model suggests that it was either placed under a cloth or completely wrapped in one.

El-Amra clay model of cattle: This model was found in a tomb and was likely intended as a symbolic source of sustenance in the afterlife.

Palette of Narmer

The Palette of Narmer (c. 31st century BCE) is named for the pharaoh who unified Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt and founded the Dynasty I. As in the art of many cultures of ancient times, the palette contains hieratic scale , in which Narmer is the largest figure. Narmer's headgear symbolizes the historic unification of the two kingdoms. On the recto (front) side of the palette, he wears the bulbed White Crown of Upper Egypt. To the right is a set of papyrus flowers, which symbolize Lower Egypt.

On the second register of the verso (back) side, he wears the more geometric Red Crown of Lower Egypt. The figures on both sides of the palette were carved in low relief.

The recto side of the palette depicts the unification of Egypt as a violent one. Narmer wields a mace in his right hand as he grabs a kneeling man by the hair with his left. The king's right arm is raised in a manner that foreshadows a deadly blow about to be struck to the enemy. Behind Narmer is his servant holding his sandals. In the bottom register, two conquered foes either flee in fear or lie dead or dying. The hieroglyphs to the left of each man's head respectively represent a walled city and the name of a defeated town. Meanwhile, the presence of the cow goddess Bat on the top register and the falcon god Horus to the right of Narmer suggests that the king acted with divine approval.

The subject matter of the verso side is more complex than that of the recto side. Bat once again flanks each side of the top register. On the second register, Narmer marches between his sandal bearer on the left and a procession of standard bearers. To the far right are ten decapitated corpses of vanquished foes. Above them are the names of towns that have fallen to Narmer. The third register depicts two mythological animals whose intertwined necks symbolize the newly unified Egypt and form a recessed area in which cosmetics were ground. On the bottom-most register, a bull tramples a vanquished foe and knocks over the walls of a city. From the epithet "Bull of His Mother," the image likely symbolizes the pharaoh, the perceived son of Bat. In later hieroglyphics , the bull with the bowed head would symbolize force.

The Palette of Narmer: On each side of the palette, the first king of a unified Egypt is depicted as an active conqueror and as a victorious son of divinity.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 640px-Man_on_boat_Ancient_Egypt.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13760518. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Egypt.Sobek.01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt.Sobek.01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Art of ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Dynastic Period of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pictographs (hieroglyphics). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/pictographs%20(hieroglyphics). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mastaba. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mastaba. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sobek. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sobek. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Set (Deity). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_(deity). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ancient Egyptian Deities. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_deities. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hunting, Fishing, and Animals in Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunting,_fishing_and_animals_in_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saqqara pyramid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Saqqara_pyramid.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egyptian architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Dynastic Period of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Dynastic Period of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tenon. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tenon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Dynastic Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early%20Dynastic%20Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- AmenhotepIII. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AmenhotepIII.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Maler der Grabkammer der Nefertari 004. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maler_der_Grabkammer_der_Nefertari_004.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ka statue. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ka%20statue. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-El-Amra_cattle_british_museum.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10630679. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Narmer_Palette.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27338888%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- El-Amra Clay Model of Cattle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Amra_clay_model_of_cattle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Dynastic Period (Egypt). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_(Egypt). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Narmer Palette. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer_Palette. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Painting of the Early Dynastic Period. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/5315. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 4.2: The Early Dynastic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.3: The Old Kingdom

The Pyramids of the Old Kingdom

Known as the “Age of the Pyramids,” the Old Kingdom was characterized by revolutionary advancements in architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the layout and function of the Pyramids of Giza

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Old Kingdom (2686 BC–2182 BC) was a period of political stability and economic prosperity, during which great tombs were built for Egyptian Kings in the form of pyramids .
- Early Egyptians built mastabas to mark the tombs of their deceased. The first king to launch a major pyramid building project was King Djoser, who built his famous “Step Pyramid” at Saqqara.
- The Pyramids of Giza are the greatest architectural achievement of the time and include three pyramid structures and the Great Sphinx monument.
- While we know that the stone for the pyramids was quarried, transported, and cut from the nearby Nile , we still cannot be sure just how the massive stones were then put into place.

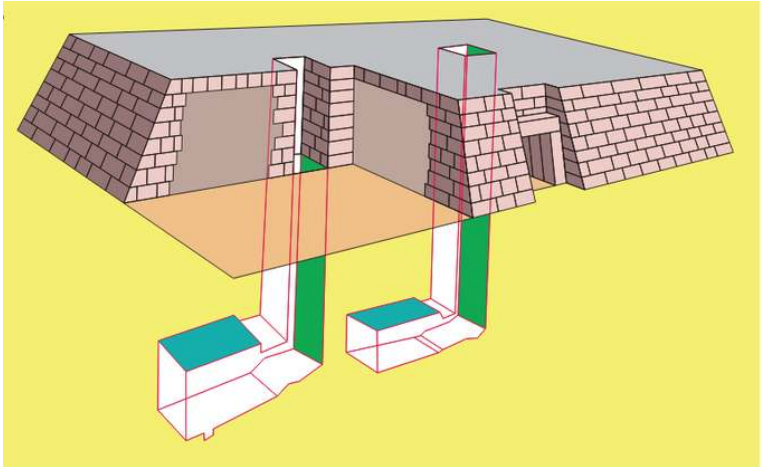
Key Terms

- **mastaba**:A rectangular structure with a flat top and slightly sloping sides, built during Ancient Egyptian times above tombs that were situated on flat land.
- **sphinx**:A creature with the head of a human and the body of an animal (commonly a lion).
- **limestone**:An abundant rock of marine and freshwater sediments, primarily composed of calcite ($CaCO_3$); it occurs in a variety of forms, both crystalline and amorphous.
- **quarry**:To obtain (mine) stone from an excavation pit, usually by blasting, cutting, or digging.
- **Pyramid Texts**:A collection of spells to assure the resurrection of the deceased and protect the Pharaoh from various malignant influences.

The Old Kingdom of Egypt existed from the third through the sixth Dynasties (2686 BC–2182 BC). A period of political stability and economic prosperity, it is characterized by revolutionary advancements in royal funerary architecture. Both Egyptian society and the economy were greatly impacted by the organization of major state-sponsored building projects, which focused on building tombs for their kings. These tombs were built in the form of great pyramids, and for this reason, the Old Kingdom is frequently referred to as the “Age of the Pyramids.”

Evolution of the Mastaba

During the Old Kingdom, royal mastabas eventually developed into rock-cut “step pyramids” and then “true pyramids,” although non-royal use of mastabas continued to be used for more than a thousand years. As the pyramids were constructed for the kings, mastabas for lesser royals were constructed around them. The interior walls of the tombs were decorated with scenes of daily life and funerary rituals . Because of the riches included in graves, tombs were a tempting site for grave-robbers. The increasing size of the pyramids is in part credited to protecting the valuables within, and many other tombs were built into rock cliffs in an attempt to thwart grave robbers.



Mastaba schematic: Inside the mastaba, a deep chamber was dug into the ground and lined with stone or bricks. Over time these tomb chambers sank more deeply and were connected by stairs. The above-ground structure had space for a small chapel to which priests and family members could bring offerings for the soul of the deceased.

Example of a Mastaba: Royal mastabas were used to mark burial sites of many important Egyptians.

Djoser's "Step Pyramid"

The first king to launch a major pyramid building project was King Djoser, who ruled in the 3rd Dynasty. He built his famous "Step Pyramid" at Saqqara, not far from the capital city of Memphis (near modern-day Cairo). In the following dynasties, the pyramid design changed from the "step" pyramid to a true pyramid shape as kings continued to build tombs for their kings. Among these, the Pyramids of Giza are considered the greatest architectural achievement of the time.

Step Pyramid at Saqqara: Djoser's step pyramid was the first of the great pyramids built during the Old Kingdom in Eqypt. Unlike later pyramids, it used a step design that is easily recognized.

The Pyramids of Giza

The Pyramids of Giza, also known as the Giza Necropolis , are one of the oldest remaining wonders of the world. The Necropolis includes three pyramid complexes: the Great Pyramid (built by King Khufu of the 4th Dynasty); the somewhat smaller Pyramid of Khafre (buit by Khufu's son); and the relatively modest-sized Pyramid of Menkaure.

The Pyramids of Giza: This view shows all three pyramid structures: the Great Pyramid, the Pyramid of Khafre, and the Pyramid of Menkaure.

The Necropolis also includes several cemeteries, a workers' village, an industrial complex, and a massive sculpture known as the Great Sphinx. The Great Sphinx is a limestone statue of a reclining sphinx—a mythical creature with a lion's body and a human head. It is commonly believed that the head is that of King Khafra, who ruled during the 4th dynasty. It is the largest monolith statue in the world, standing 241 ft long, 63 ft wide, and 66.34 ft high.

Albumen print of the Sphinx of Giza, partially excavated, with two pyramids in background: The Great Sphinx of Giza is the largest monolith statue in the world and was believed to have been built for King Khafra during the 4th Dynasty.

We still do not know exactly how the huge and impressive stone monuments were built. Most of the stone for the interior seems to have been quarried immediately to the south of the construction site. The smooth exterior of the pyramid, however, was made of a fine grade of white limestone that was quarried from the other side of the Nile River. These exterior blocks had to be carefully cut, transported by river barge to Giza, and dragged up ramps to the construction site. Theorists disagree as to the method by which the stones were then put into place and how possible the method was. It's also possible that the architects developed their techniques over time.

The sides of all three of the Giza pyramids were astronomically oriented to the north-south and east-west within a small fraction of a degree. To ensure that the pyramid remained symmetrical, the exterior casing stones all had to be equal in height and width. Workers might have marked all the blocks to indicate the angle of the pyramid wall and trimmed the surfaces carefully so that the blocks fit together.

The work of quarrying, moving, setting, and sculpting the huge amount of stone used to build the pyramids might have been accomplished by several thousand skilled workers and unskilled laborers. Evidence from the tombs indicates that a workforce of 10,000 laborers working in three-month shifts took around 30 years to build a single pyramid.

Mummification and Burial Ritual

In order to preserve the body and, therefore, the soul of the deceased, Egyptians used the process of mummification. This involved removing the internal organs, wrapping the body in linen, and burying the mummy in a rectangular stone sarcophagus or wooden coffin. Because it was believed that the deceased would continue his or her earthly life in the afterlife, accommodations were made to ensure this transition. The Opening of the Mouth Ceremony was a ritual involving the symbolic animation of a mummy by magically opening its mouth so that it could breathe, speak, eat, and drink in the afterlife.

Many mummies were provided with some form of funerary literature, often consisting of spells and instructions for navigating the afterlife. During the Old Kingdom, only the pharaoh had access to this material, which scholars refer to as the Pyramid Texts . The Pyramid Texts are a collection of spells to assure the royal resurrection and protect the pharaoh from various malignant influences.

Sculpture of the Old Kingdom

Egyptian artisans during the Old Kingdom perfected the art of sculpting and carving intricate relief decoration out of stone.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the role of *ka* statues and funerary art in the Old Kingdom of Ancient Egypt

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Egyptian sculpture took the form of statues (which were often life-sized) and reliefs (which were carved into blocks of stone). Many sculptures were painted using natural minerals.
- Sculptures from the Old Kingdom are characteristically more natural in style than their predecessors.
- Sculptures, such as the *ka* statues , often served as funerary art , accompanying the deceased in burial tombs with the intention of preserving life after death.
- Reserve heads, found in the tombs of commoners, might have served as an equivalent of the *ka* statue, but the exact purpose remains a matter of debate. The Great Sphinx , located among the Pyramids of Giza, is the largest monolith statue in the world.

Key Terms

- **Ka statue**:A type of ancient Egyptian statue intended to provide a resting place for the ka, or spirit, of the person after death. The ancient Egyptians believed the ka (or life-force), along with the physical body, name, ba (personality or soul), and šwt (shadow) made up the five aspects of a person.
- **funerary art**:Any work of art forming, or placed in, a repository for the remains of the dead (such as a tomb).
- **ochre**:An earth pigment containing silica, aluminum, and ferric oxide.
- **monolith**:A large single block of stone used in architecture and sculpture.

Egyptian sculptors created the first life-sized statues and fine reliefs in stone, copper, and wood. They perfected the art of carving intricate relief decoration and produced detailed images of animals, plants, and even landscapes, recording the essential elements of their world for eternity in scenes painted and carved on the walls of temples and tombs. Kings used reliefs to record victories in battle, royal decrees, and religious scenes, and sculptures of kings, goddesses, and gods were common as well. Sculptures from the Old Kingdom are characteristically more natural in style than their predecessors. Toward the end of the Old Kingdom, images of people shifted toward formalized nude figures with long bodies and large eyes.

Egyptian sculpture of the Old Kingdom: This sculpture was created in the Fourth Dynasty, and represents the goddess Hathor, King Menkaure, and the goddess Bat.

The Great Sphinx, located among the Pyramids of Giza, is the largest monolith statue in the world, standing 241 feet long, 63 feet wide, and 66.34 feet high. Carved out of limestone , it represents a mythical creature known as a sphinx, with a lion’s body and a human head. It is commonly believed that the head of the Great Sphinx is that of the Fourth Dynasty (2680-2565 BCE) pharaoh Khafre, whose pyramid stands directly behind the giant sculpture.

The Great Sphinx of Giza: The Great Sphinx, located among the Pyramids of Giza, is the largest monolith statue in the world.

While most sculptures were made of stone, wood was sometimes used as a cheap and easily carved substitute. Paints were obtained from minerals such as iron ores (red and yellow ochres), copper ores (blue and green), soot or charcoal (black), and limestone (white). Paints could be mixed with gum arabic as a binder and pressed into cakes, which could be moistened with water when needed.

By the Fourth Dynasty, the idea of the *ka* statue was firmly established. Typically made of wood or stone, these statues were placed in tombs as a resting place for the *ka*, or spirit, of the person after death. Other sculptural works served as funerary art, accompanying the deceased in burial tombs with the intention of preserving life after death. Strict conventions that changed very little over the course of Egyptian history were intended to convey the timeless and non-aging quality of the figure's *ka*.

Ka statue of Horawibra

The Fourth Dynasty also witnessed the production of so-called “reserve heads,” plain and hairless naturalistic busts found primarily in non-royal tombs. Each head bears a striking individuality despite many common features, leading to the argument that they were portraits. Some scholars believe that they were intended as the commoners’ equivalent of *ka* statues, although the exact purpose remains a matter of debate.

Reserve heads (c. 26th century BCE): These individualized busts might have been the commoners’ equivalent of the *ka* statue, but the exact purpose remains unknown.

Very strict conventions governed the crafting of deity figures, and these rules were followed so strictly that over three thousand years, the appearance of statues changed very little. For example, the sky god (Horus) was to be represented with a falcon’s head, while the god of funeral rites (Anubis) was to be always shown with a jackal’s head.

In addition to funerary art, Egyptians surrounded themselves with objects to enhance their lives in this world, producing cosmetic vessels and finely carved and inlaid furniture. Over time, Egyptian artists adopted a limited repertoire of standard types and established a formal artistic canon that would define Egyptian art for more than 3,000 years while remaining flexible enough to allow for subtle variation and innovation.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- All Gizah Pyramids. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:All_Gizah_Pyramids.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sphinx partially excavated2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sphinx_partially_excavated2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Example of a Mastaba. **Provided by**: Wikimedia commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mastaba#/media/File:Mastaba-faraoun-3.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mastaba-schematics.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15962446. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saqqara1 Djoser's step pyramid. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saqqara1_Djoser's_step_pyramid.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Sphinx. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Old Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sphinx. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sphinx. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- limestone. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/limestone. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quarry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quarry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egyptian Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_egyptian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Giza Pyramid Complex. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Giza_pyramid_complex. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mastaba. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mastaba. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hathor Menkaure Bat triad fourth dynasty Cairo Museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hathor_Menkaure_Bat_triad_fourth_dynasty_Cairo_Museum.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Reserve_heads.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3786481. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ka Statue of horawibra. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ka_Statue_of_horawibra.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tourist at Sphinx, Giza plateau. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tourist_at_Sphinx,_Giza_plateau.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/Ancient Art. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/Ancient_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Old Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Sphinx. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- funerary art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/funerary%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- monolith. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/monolith. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ochre. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ochre. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reserve Head. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Reserve_head. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 4.3: The Old Kingdom is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.4: The Middle Kingdom

Sculpture of the Middle Kingdom

Innovations during the Middle Kingdom included the solemnity evident in portraits of Senusret III and block statues.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the sculptural innovations during Egypt's Middle Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mentuhotep II was the first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom , restoring stability after a period of pharaonic weakness and civil war. Senusret III is considered to be perhaps the most powerful Egyptian ruler of the dynasty and led the kingdom to an era of peace and prosperity.
- Senusret III is known for his strikingly somber sculptures in which he appears careworn and grave. While many statues portray him as a vigorous young man, others deviate from this standard and illustrate him as mature and aging. This is often interpreted as a portrayal of the burden of power and kingship.
- Another important innovation in sculpture during the Middle Kingdom was the block statue, which consisted of a man squatting with his knees drawn up to his chest.
- Aristocratic women's role as art patrons during the Middle Kingdom speaks to their high status and gender equality.

Key Terms

- **deified**:To be treated as worthy of worship, or regarded as a god.
- **Middle Kingdom**:Egypt in the Twelfth and Thirteenth dynasties, between 2055 BC and 1650 BC.

Mentuhotep II

The Middle Kingdom (c. 2000-1650 BCE) was marked by the reunification of Egypt following a period of weak pharaonic power and civil war called the First Intermediate. Mentuhotep II restored stability in 2041 BCE after launching an attack that met with little resistance. After toppling the last rulers of the Tenth Dynasty, Mentuhotep II began consolidating his power over all Egypt, completing the process circa 2000 BCE. His subjects considered him to be divine or semi-divine, as suggested in a relief depicting the pharaoh receiving offerings .

Mentuhotep II receiving offerings: Mentuhotep II, seated, holds the crook as a symbol of power.

Senusret III

During the Middle Kingdom, relief and portrait sculpture captured subtle, individual details that reached new heights of technical perfection. Some of the finest examples of sculpture during this time was at the height of the empire under Pharaoh Senusret III.

Senusret III (also written as Senwosret III or Sesostris III) ruled from 1878–1839 BCE and was the fifth monarch of the Twelfth Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom. His military campaigns gave rise to an era of peace and economic prosperity that not only reduced the power of regional rulers, but also led to a revival in craftwork, trade, and urban development in the Egyptian kingdom. One of the few kings who were deified and honored with a cult during their own lifetime, he is considered to be perhaps the most powerful Egyptian ruler of the dynasty.

Head of pharaoh Sesostris III, made of red granite, circa 1850 BCE: Some of the sculptures of Senusret III, like this one, portray him as an aging man—a style that deviated from the standard representation of kings.

Aside from his accomplishments in architecture and war, Senusret III is known for his strikingly somber sculptures in which he appears careworn and grave. Deviating from the standard way of representing kings, Senusret III and his successor Amenemhat III had themselves portrayed as mature, aging men. This is often interpreted as a portrayal of the burden of power and kingship. The change in representation as ideological, and not something to be interpreted as the portrayal of an aging king, is shown by the fact that in one single relief, Senusret III was represented as a vigorous young man, following the centuries old tradition, *and* as a mature aging king.

Three black granite statues of the pharaoh Sesotris III, seen in right profile (Twelfth Dynasty, circa 1850 BCE): Senusret III is known for his strikingly somber sculptures.

Block Statues and Women Patrons

Another important innovation in sculpture that occurred during the Middle Kingdom was the block statue, which would continue to be popular through to the Ptolemaic age almost 2,000 years later. Block statues consist of a man squatting with his knees drawn up to his chest and his arms folded on top of his knees. Often, these men are wearing a wide cloak that reduces the body of the figure to a simple block-like shape. In some cases the cloak covers the feet completely, and in others the feet are left uncovered. The head of the sculpture contains the most detail.

Example of a block statue: Block statues of the Middle Kingdom consisted of a man squatting with his knees drawn up to his chest.

The sculpture pictured below—the fact that a private woman could have a sculpture made for herself—speaks volumes for the equality of gender in ancient Egypt. The heavy tripartite wig frames the broad face and passes behind the ears, thus giving the impression of forcing them forward. They are large in keeping with the ancient Egyptian ideal of beauty; the same ideal required small breasts, and in this respect, the sculpture is no exception. Whereas the natural curve of the eyebrows dips towards the root of the nose, the artificial eyebrows in low relief are absolutely straight above the inner corners of the eyes, a feature which places the bust early in the early Twelfth Dynasty. Around 1900 BCE, these artificial eyebrows, too, began to follow the natural curve and dipped toward the nose.

Head and torso of a noblewoman (Twelfth Dynasty): This sculpture, commissioned by a noblewoman, provides evidence of gender equality among the elite during the Middle Kingdom.

Tombs of the Middle Kingdom

Grand and royal tombs continued to be built for the deceased during the prosperous Middle Kingdom.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the tombs and burial goods of the Middle Kingdom with those of the Old Kingdom.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom restored the country's prosperity and stability, they stimulated a resurgence of art, literature, and monumental building projects, including tombs and burial goods .
- While burial goods continued to be common, objects of daily use were not typically included as they were in the Old Kingdom.
- Toward the end of the Middle Kingdom, new objects were introduced, such as shabtis and scarabs.
- Coffin Texts evolved from the previous Pyramid texts of the Old Kingdom, expanding and introducing spells that were more relatable to nobles and non-royal Egyptians.

Key Terms

- **Pyramid Text**:A collection of spells to protect the pharaoh from harm in the afterlife.
- **Osiris**:The god of the underworld and husband of the goddess Isis in the Egyptian pantheon. He is usually depicted with green skin and wrapped in a mummy's linen.
- **shabti**:A figurine placed in tombs to act as servants for the deceased in the afterlife.
- **sarcophagus**:A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.
- **burial goods**:Items included in tombs that were thought to be necessary in the afterlife, from everyday objects to jewelry and valuables.

Royal funerary practices in the Middle Kingdom remained much the same as in the Old Kingdom, with kings continuing to build pyramids for their burials. Unlike the Old Kingdom, however, Middle Kingdom royal pyramids were not quite as well constructed, and so few of them remain as pyramid structures today. Among the tombs built during this time are Amenemhat I's funerary monument at El-Lisht; Sesostris I's funerary monument; Amenemhat III's pyramid at Hawara, which includes an elaborate

labyrinth complex; and Sesostris II's pyramid at Illahun. The construction of pyramids declined toward the end of the Twelfth Dynasty , as instability led to the decline of the Middle Kingdom.

Burial goods continued to be commonplace in tombs. Starting in the First Intermediate period, wooden models became very popular, often depicting everyday activities that the deceased expected to continue doing in the afterlife. The standard coffin was rectangular and brightly painted, often including an offering formula. Unlike the Old Kingdom, objects of daily use were not often included in the tombs; however, they reappeared toward the end of the Middle Kingdom.

Other new objects were introduced toward the end of the Middle Kingdom as well, including the first shabtis (also known as ushabtis) and the first scarabs. Shabtis were funerary figurines placed in tombs of the deceased to help them in the afterlife. Used from the Middle Kingdom until the end of the Ptolemaic Period nearly 2000 years later, most shabtis were of a small size, often covering the floor around a sarcophagus . Exceptional shabtis were of larger size, or produced as a one-of-a-kind master work. They were generally distinguished from other statuettes by being inscribed with the name of the deceased, his titles, and often with spells from the Coffin Texts. Shabtis were created to act as the deceased's servants, performing the manual labor necessary for the plentiful existence of the afterlife.

Shabti figures: Shabti were funerary figurines that were placed in tombs along with the deceased to assist them in the afterlife.

Scarabs were popular amulets believed to be protectors of written products. The scarab was also used as a holder or medium for personal name seals. A figurine of a scarab would be carved out of stone, and then on the smooth stomach of the scarab, the engraving of a seal was made.

A modern imitation of an ancient Egyptian scarab amulet: Scarabs were often included in tombs along with other burial goods as protectors of written products.

Another change in funerary practice during this time had to do with non-royal Egyptians. In contrast to elitist Old Kingdom attitudes towards the gods, the Middle Kingdom experienced an increase in expressions of personal piety and what could be called a democratization of the afterlife. In this worldview , all people possessed a soul and could be welcomed into the company of the gods after death.

In the Old Kingdom, the Pyramid Texts, which contained spells to help the dead reach the afterlife successfully, were only accessible to the elite. During the Middle Kingdom, Egyptians outside of the elite levels of society gained access to this funerary literature and began incorporating it into their own burials. Coffin Texts, as they are called by the scholars, expanded upon the Pyramid Texts, introducing new spells and incorporating slight changes to make them more relatable to the nobility. As seen in the image below, Coffin Texts could appear as paintings or inscriptions on the inside of the coffin. Due to the limited writing surfaces of some of these objects, the spells were often abbreviated, giving rise to long and short versions.

Map of the netherworld from the coffin of Gua, from Deir el-Bersha, Egypt (Twelfth Dynasty, 1985-1795 BCE): The map inscribed in this coffin comprises part of the Coffin Texts intended to help the deceased navigate through the Duat.

In contrast to the Pyramid Texts, which focus on the celestial realm, the Coffin Texts emphasize the subterranean elements of the afterlife ruled by Osiris in a place called the *Duat*. People of all classes had access to this afterlife, in which they would be judged

by Osiris and his council according to their deeds in life. This realm is described as containing threatening beings, traps, and snares for which the deceased must be prepared. Spells in the Coffin Texts were intended to help the deceased contend with these impediments.

Stelae of the Middle Kingdom

The stelae of Ancient Egypt served many purposes, from funerary, to marking territory, to publishing decrees.

Learning Objectives

Describe the purposes of stelae in ancient Egyptian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The earliest Egyptian stelae date back to the mid- to late third millennium BCE.
- Stelae are stone slabs that are inscribed, carved, or painted with imagery or text. While most were taller than they were wide, slab stelae took a horizontal dimension .
- Funerary stelae were generally built in honor of the deceased and decorated with their names and titles.
- Stelae also were used to publish laws and decrees, record a ruler's exploits and honors, mark sacred territories or mortgaged properties, or to commemorate military victories.
- Obelisks , special forms of boundary stelae, were erected in pairs to mark the entrances of temples.

Key Terms

- **obelisk**:A tall, four-sided, narrow tapering monument which ends in a pyramid-like shape at the top.
- **lintel**:A structural horizontal block that spans the space or opening between two vertical supports.
- **funerary**:Of or relating to the interment or commemoration of the dead.
- **stelae**:Stone or wooden slabs, generally taller than they are wide, often erected for funerals commemorative purposes and decorated with images or text.

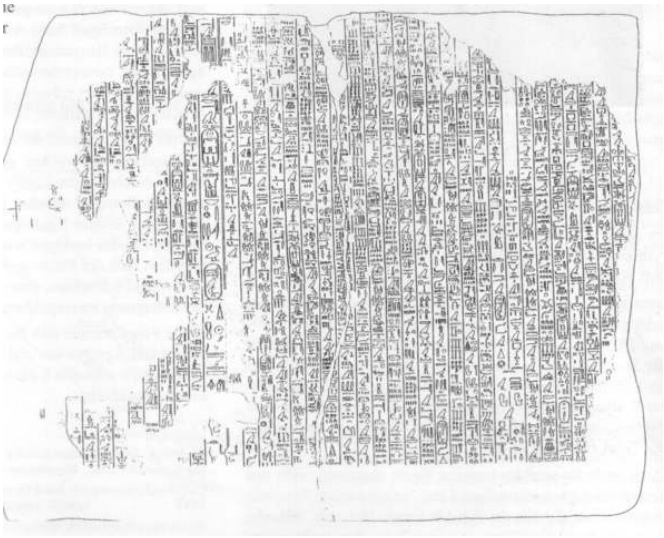
Egyptians were well known for their stelae, the earliest of which date back to the mid- to late third millennium BCE. Stelae are stone slabs that served many purposes, from funerary, to marking territory, to publishing decrees. Images and text were intimately interwoven and inscribed, carved in relief , or painted on the stelae. While most stelae were taller than they were wide, the slab stelae took a horizontal dimension and was used by a small list of ancient Egyptian dignitaries or their wives. The huge number of stelae surviving from ancient Egypt constitute one of the largest and most significant sources of information on those civilizations .

Funerary stelae were generally built in honor of the deceased and decorated with their names and titles. While some funerary stelae were in the form of slab stelae, this funerary stelae of a bowman named Semin (c. 2120-2051 BCE) appears to have been a traditional vertical stelae.

Funerary stelae of the bowman Semin: Funerary stelae were usually inscribed with the name and title of the deceased, along with images or hieroglyphs.

Slab stelae, when used for funerary purposes, were commonly commissioned by dignitaries and their wives. They also served as doorway lintels as early as the third millennium BCE, most famously decorating the home of Old Kingdom architect Hemon.

Stelae also were used to publish laws and decrees, to record a ruler's exploits and honors, mark sacred territories or mortgaged properties, or to commemorate military victories. Much of what we know of the kingdoms and administrations of Egyptian kings are from the public and private stelae that recorded bureaucratic titles and other administrative information. One example of such stelae is the *Annals of Amenemhat II*, an important historical document for the reign of Amenemhat II (r. 1929–1895 BCE) and also for the history of Ancient Egypt and understanding kingship in general.



Annals of Amenemhat II: This drawing represents one of the larger fragments of this stelae.

Many stelae were used as territorial markers to delineate land ownership. The most famous of these would be used at Amarna during the New Kingdom under Akhenaten. For much of Egyptian history, including the Middle Kingdom , obelisks erected in pairs were used to mark the entrances of temples. The earliest temple obelisk still in its original position is the red granite Obelisk of Senusret I (Twelfth Dynasty) at Al-Matariyyah in modern Heliopolis. The obelisk was the symbol and perceived place of existence of the sun god Ra.

Obelisk of Senusret I: This obelisk is one half of a pair that originally marked the entrance to the temple of the sun god Ra.

Architecture of the Middle Kingdom

When Egypt had military and political security and vast agricultural and mineral wealth, its architecture flourished.

Learning Objectives

Describe the major building projects initiated during Egypt's Middle Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The reign of Amenemhat III is known for its exploitation of resources and construction of the so-called "Black Pyramid ."
- Ancient Egyptian architects used sun-dried bricks, fine sandstone, limestone , and granite for their building purposes, though typically reserved stone for temples and tombs.
- Hieroglyphic and pictorial carvings in brilliant colors were abundantly used to decorate Egyptian structures.
- Senusret III is known for his construction of massive forts to defend the region after his many military campaigns.
- The Karnak Temple Complex is an example of fine architecture that was begun during the Middle Kingdom and continued through the Ptolemaic period.

Key Terms

- **hieroglyph**:An element of an Egyptian writing system.

As the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom restored the country's prosperity and stability, there was a resurgence of building projects. When Egypt had secured military and political security and vast agricultural and mineral wealth, its architecture flourished. Grand tombs in the form of pyramids continued to be built throughout the Middle Kingdom, along with villages, cities, and forts. The reign of Amenemhat III is especially known for its exploitation of resources, in which mining camps—previously only used by intermittent expeditions—were operated on a semi-permanent basis. A vast labor force of Canaanite settlers from the Near East aided in mining and building campaigns.

Ancient Egyptian architects used sun-dried bricks, fine sandstone, limestone, and granite for their building purposes. As in the Old Kingdom, stone was most often reserved for tombs and temples, while bricks were used for palaces, fortresses, everyday houses, and town walls. Mud was collected from the nearby Nile River, placed in molds, and left to dry and harden in the hot sun until they formed bricks for construction. Architects carefully planned all their work, fitting their stones and bricks precisely together.

Hieroglyphic and pictorial carvings in brilliant colors were abundantly used to decorate Egyptian structures, and motifs such as the scarab, sacred beetle, solar disk, and vulture were common.

The “Black Pyramid” of Amenemhat III

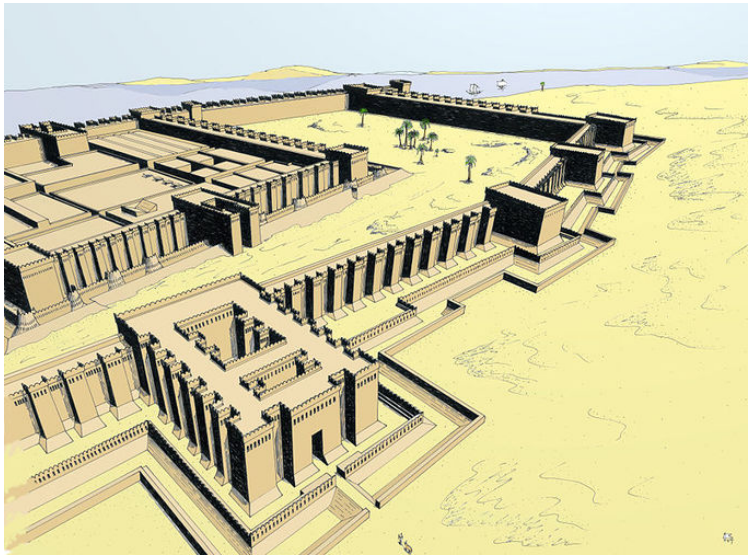
The Black Pyramid, the first to house both the pharaoh and his queens, was built for Amenemhat III (r. 1860–1814 BCE). It is one of the five remaining pyramids of the original eleven pyramids at Dahshur in Egypt. Originally named *Amenemhet is Mighty*, the pyramid earned the name “Black Pyramid” for its dark, decaying appearance as a rubble mound. Typical for Middle Kingdom pyramids, the Black Pyramid, although encased in limestone, is made of mud brick and clay instead of stone. The ground-level structures consist of the entrance opening into the courtyard and mortuary temple, surrounded by walls. There are two sets of walls; between them, there are ten shaft tombs, which are a type of burial structure formed from graves built into natural rock. The capstone of the pyramid was covered with inscriptions and religious symbols.

Black Pyramid of Amenemhat III: Middle Kingdom pyramids consist of mud brick and clay encased in limestone.

Workers’ Villages and Forts

Workers’ villages were often built nearby to pyramid construction sites. Kahun (also known as El-Lahun), for example, is a village that was associated with the pyramid of Senusret II. The town was laid out in a regular plan, with mud-brick town walls on three sides. No evidence was found of a fourth wall, which may have collapsed and been washed away during the annual inundation. The town was rectangular in shape and was divided internally by a mud brick wall as large and strong as the exterior walls. This wall divided about one third of the area of the town, and in this smaller area the houses consisted of rows of back-to-back, side-by-side single room houses. The larger area, which was higher up the slope and thus benefited from whatever breeze was blowing, contained a much smaller number of large, multi-room villas, indicating perhaps a class separation between workers and overseers. A major feature of the town was the so-called “acropolis” building; its column bases suggest its importance.

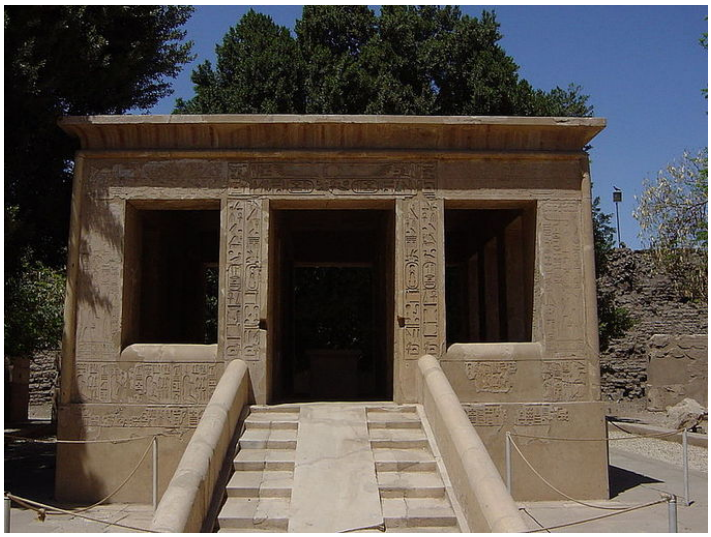
Senusret III was a warrior-king who helped the Middle Kingdom reach its height of prosperity. In his sixth year, he re-dredged an Old Kingdom canal around the first cataract to facilitate travel to upper Nubia, using this to launch a series of brutal campaigns. After his victories, Senusret III built a series of massive forts throughout the country to establish the formal boundary between Egyptian conquests and unconquered Nubia. Buhen was the northernmost of a line of forts within signaling distance of one another. The fortress itself extended more than 150 meters along the west bank of the Nile, covering 13,000 square meters, and had within its wall a small town laid out in a grid system. At its peak, it probably had a population of around 3500 people. The fortress also included the administration for the whole fortified region. Its fortifications included a moat three meters deep, drawbridges, bastions, buttresses , ramparts, battlements, loopholes, and a catapult. The walls of the fort were about five meters thick and ten meters high .



A view of Buhen from the north: Buhen was an ancient fort built by Senusret III during his multiple campaigns. Its moat, drawbridges, and bastions would have provided good defense against enemy attacks.

The Karnak Temple Complex

The Karnak Temple Complex is an example of fine architecture that was begun during the Middle Kingdom and continued through the Ptolemaic period. Built by Senusret I, it was comprised of a vast mix of temples, chapels, pylons , and other buildings. The White Chapel, also referred to as the Jubilee Chapel, is one of the finest examples of architecture during this time. Its columns were intricately decorated with reliefs of a very high quality. Later in the New Kingdom, the Chapel was demolished; however, the dismantled pieces were discovered in the 1920s and carefully assembled into the building that is seen today.



The White Chapel: The White Chapel of Senusret I at Karnak is a good example of the fine quality of art and architecture produced during the Twelfth Dynasty. Its columns hold reliefs of a very high quality, which are hardly seen elsewhere at Karnak.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- RedGraniteHeadOfSesostrisIII-BritishMuseum-August19-08. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RedGraniteHeadOfSesostrisIII-BritishMuseum-August19-08.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 509px-Louvre-antiquites-egyptiennes-p1020391.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=394177. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Block statue Pa-Akh-Ra CdM. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Block_statue_Pa-Akh-Ra_CdM.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ThreeStatuesOfSesotrisIII-RightProfiles-BritishMuseum-August19-08. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ThreeStatuesOfSesotrisIII-RightProfiles-BritishMuseum-August19-08.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 315px-Head_and_Torso_of_a_Noblewoman,_ca._1844-1837_B.C.E._59.1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=33311525. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt%23Old_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Senusret III. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Senusret_III. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- deified. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/deified. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mentuhotep II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentuhotep_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 12th Dynasty (1991 - 1783). **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/12th-Dynasty-El-Lisht-Hawara-Illahun_1.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 360px-Coffin_of_Gua.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3804227%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Egyptian funerary figurines louvre 180flip. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Egyptian_funerary_figurines_louvre_180flip.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Scarab550bc. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Scarab550bc.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Scarab artifact. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarab_artifact. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egyptian tomb. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_tomb. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shabti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabti. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mummification. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mummification%23The_Egyptian_mummification_process. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt%23Old_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sarcophagus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sarcophagus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- burial goods. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/burial%20goods. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pyramid Text. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid%20Text. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Coffin Texts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Coffin_Texts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 593px-Annalenstein.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25589325. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Funerary_stele_of_bowman_Semin.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2757021. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 320px-Heliopolis200501.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15285922. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Slab stela. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Slab_stela. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Obelisk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Obelisk. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stele. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- funerary. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/funerary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundary Stelae of Akhenaten. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Boundary_Stelae_of_Akhenaten. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Annals of Amenemhat II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Annals_of_Amenemhat_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lintel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lintel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Senusret I. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Senusret_I. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 589px-Black_Pyramid_of_Amenemhat_III..JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12634500. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- White Chapel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Chapel.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buhen3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Buhen3.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buhen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buhen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- El-Lahun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Lahun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt%23Old_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Karnak. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnak. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egyptian architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- El-Lisht. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Lisht. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- White Chapel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Chapel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Kingdom of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Kingdom_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- hieroglyph. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/hieroglyph. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pyramid of Amenemhat III (Dahshur). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_of_Amenemhat_III_(Dahshur). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 4.4: The Middle Kingdom is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.5: The New Kingdom

Architecture of the New Kingdom

The golden age of the New Kingdom created huge prosperity for Egypt and allowed for the proliferation of monumental architecture.

Learning Objectives

Explain why the New Kingdom is considered the golden age of Ancient Egyptian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Luxor Temple is a large temple complex located in what was ancient Thebes and is known for its use of symbolism and illusionism.
- The Temples at Karnak, part of the great city of Thebes, were constructed as an ancient place of worship for the god Amun. They consist of a vast mix of temples, chapels, pylons , obelisks , and hypostyle halls decorated with elaborate friezes .
- The Temples of Karnak consists of four main parts: the Precinct of Amun-Re, the Precinct of Mut, the Precinct of Montu, and the Temple of Amenhotep IV.
- Although pyramids were no longer built at this time, magnificent tombs were constructed for the pharaohs and powerful nobles of the New Kingdom in the Valley of the Kings over a period of nearly 500 years.
- Among the most famous tombs in the Valley of the Kings are the tombs of Tutankhamun, Hatshepsut, Ramesses, and Nerfertiti.

Key Terms

- **pylon**:A gateway to the inner part of an Ancient Egyptian temple.
- **hypostyle hall**:A structure in which a roof is supported by columns.
- **frieze**:Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

The New Kingdom is known as the golden age of ancient Egyptian history and is the period of Hatshepsut, Tutankhamun, Ramses II, and other famous pharaohs. The wealth gained through military dominance created huge prosperity for Egypt and allowed for the proliferation of monumental architecture, especially works that glorified the pharaohs' achievements. Starting with Hatshepsut, buildings were of a grander scale than anything previously seen in the Middle Kingdom .

Luxor Temple

Luxor Temple is a large temple complex located on the east bank of the Nile River in what was ancient Thebes (today the city of Luxor). There are six great temples: four on the left bank known as Goornah, Deir-el-Bahri, the Ramesseum, and Medinet Habu; and two on the right bank known as the Karnak and Luxor. The Luxor temple was built with Nubian sandstone from south-western Egypt. Like other Egyptian structures, common techniques were the use of *symbolism* and *illusionism*. For example, a sanctuary shaped like an Anubis Jackal was used as a representational symbol of Anubis. To emphasize height and distance and enhance an existing pathway, two obelisks flanking the entrance were built with the illusion that they were the same height—even though they weren't.

Temples at Karnak

This complex is comprised of a vast mix of decayed temples, chapels, pylons, and other buildings. An ancient place of worship for the god Amun, it was part of the monumental city of Thebes. Today, the complex is a vast open-air museum and the largest ancient religious site in the world. The complex consists of four main parts: the Precinct of Amun-Re, the Precinct of Mut, the Precinct of Montu, and the Temple of Amenhotep IV.

The Precinct of Amun-Re, also referred to as the *Temple of Amun*, is the largest of the temples and the only one open to the public today. The columns of its Hypostyle Hall imitate lotus plants and contain elaborate sunken relief .

A panorama of the great hypostyle hall at Karnak: The Precinct of Amun-Re is part of the great temple complex at Karnak.

Almost every pharaoh of that dynasty has added something to the temple site. It features large sandstone columns, several colossal statues, and one of the largest obelisks, weighing 328 tons and standing 29 meters tall. Many of the walls were decorated with richly ornamented friezes.

A panorama of a frieze in the Precinct of Amun-Re: Great monuments and temples were often decorated with elaborate relief sculpture during the New Kingdom.

Located to the south of the newer Amen-Re complex, the Precinct of Mut was dedicated to the mother goddess *Mut*. Hapshepsut helped to restore the original precinct, which had been ravaged during the Hyksos occupation, and had twin obelisks erected at the entrance to the temple; one still stands as the tallest surviving ancient obelisk in the world. The precinct has several smaller temples associated with it and has its own sacred lake, constructed in a crescent shape. Six hundred black granite statues were found in the courtyard to her temple, possibly the oldest portion of the site.

The smaller Precinct of Montu is dedicated to the war-god of the Theban Triad, *Montu*, and is located to the north of the Amun-Re complex.

The Temple of Amenhotep IV was located east of the main complex and was destroyed immediately after the death of its builder, so its full extent and layout is currently unknown.

The Valley of the Kings

By this time, pyramids were no longer built by kings, but they continued to build magnificent tombs. This renowned valley in Egypt is where, for a period of nearly 500 years, tombs were constructed for the Pharaohs and powerful nobles of the New Kingdom. The valley is known to contain 63 tombs and chambers, the most well known of which is the tomb of Tutankhamun (commonly known as King Tut). Despite its small size, it is the most complete ancient Egyptian royal tomb ever found. In 1979, the Valley became a World Heritage Site, along with the rest of the Theban Necropolis .

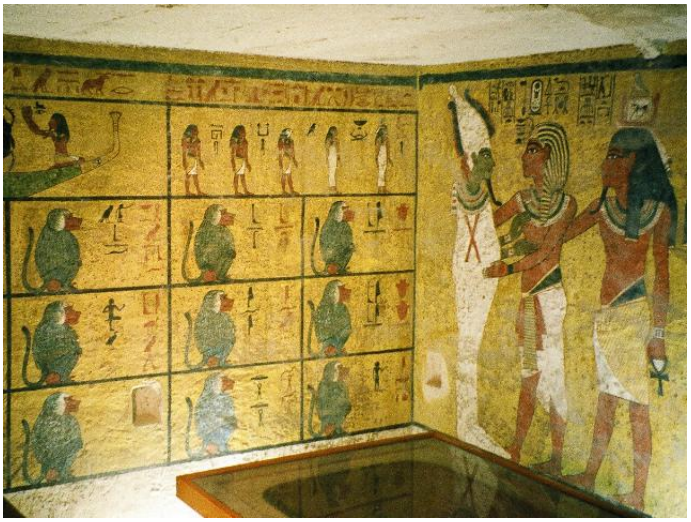
Hatshepsut

The Temple of Hatshepsut was Hatshepsut's mortuary temple and was the first to be built in the area. The focal point of the tomb was the *Djeser-Djeseru*, a colonnaded structure of perfect harmony that predates the Parthenon by nearly one thousand years. Built into a cliff face, *Djeser-Djeseru*, or "the Sublime of Sublimes," sits atop a series of terraces that once were graced with lush gardens. Funerary goods belonging to Hatshepsut include a lioness "throne," a game board with carved lioness head, red-jasper game pieces bearing her title as pharaoh, a signet ring, and a partial shabti figurine bearing her name.

Colonnaded design of Hatshepsut temple: Hatshepsut's temple is most famous for its Djeser-Djeseru, a colonnaded structure of such architectural skill that predates the Parthenon by nearly one thousand years.

Tutankhamun

Tutankhamun was an Egyptian pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who ruled from around 1332 BC to 1323 BCE. Popularly referred to as "King Tut," the boy-king took the throne when he was nine and ruled until his early death at age nineteen. Tutankhamun was buried in a tomb that was small relative to his status. His death may have occurred unexpectedly, before the completion of a grander royal tomb, so that his mummy was buried in a tomb intended for someone else. His mummy still rests in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings, though is now on display in a climate-controlled glass box rather than his original golden sarcophagus . Relics and artifacts from his tomb, including his pectoral jewels and a red granite lion, are among the most traveled artifacts in the world.



Painted walls in the burial chamber of Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of the Kings, Egypt (late 14th century BCE): Tutankhamun's burial chamber contained beautiful works of art, text, and hieroglyphics.

Ramses II

The Tomb of Nefertari, the most famous of Ramses's consorts, is also located in the Valley of the Kings and is known for its magnificent wall paintings.

The Ramesseum was the great mortuary temple of Ramses II. An enormous pylon representing scenes of the great pharaoh's reign stood before one of the opening courts, with the royal palace at the left and a gigantic statue of the king looming up at the back. Scattered remains of two statues of the seated king can be seen, one in pink granite and the other in black granite, which once

flanked the entrance to the temple. Thirty-nine out of the 48 columns still stand in the hypostyle hall, and part of the gold-and-blue decorated ceiling has also been preserved.

Ramesseum courtyard: The design of Ramses's mortuary temple adheres to the standard canons of New Kingdom temple architecture. Oriented northwest and southeast, the temple itself comprised two stone pylons (gateways, some 60 m wide), one after the other, each leading into a courtyard.

The ancient temples in Thebes were transformed to reflect honor to Ramses's power. Later, Ramses moved the capital of his kingdom from Thebes to the newly established city of Pi-Ramses, which he used as a main base for his campaigns. Dominated by huge temples and the king's vast residential palace, it was complete with its own zoo. Ramses constructed the complex of Abu Simbel and is perhaps best known for his mortuary temple known as the Ramesseum. After his death, he was buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings; his body was later moved to a royal cache , where it was discovered in 1881. It is now on display in the Cairo Museum.

The Book of the Dead

The *Book of the Dead* was a funerary text designed to assist a deceased person's journey through the underworld and into the afterlife.

Learning Objectives

Describe what the *Book of the Dead* was and explain its use in Ancient Egypt

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The *Book of the Dead* was part of a tradition of funerary texts which includes the earlier Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom and Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom .
- Unlike previous texts which were written on walls or objects in the funerary chamber, the *Book of the Dead* was written on expensive papyrus .
- There was no single *Book of the Dead*, and works tended to vary widely, perhaps based on the preferences of the people commissioning them.
- The text of a *Book of the Dead* in the New Kingdom was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs , with lavish illustrations between the text.

Key Terms

- **hieratic**:A writing system used in pharaonic Egypt that was developed alongside the hieroglyphic system, primarily written in ink with a reed brush on papyrus, allowing scribes to write quickly without resorting to the time consuming hieroglyphs.

- **papyrus**:A material similar to paper made from the Cyperus papyrus plant.

The *Book of the Dead* is the modern name of an ancient Egyptian funerary text, used from the beginning of the New Kingdom (around 1550 BCE) to around 50 BCE. The original Egyptian name is translated as “Book of Coming Forth by Day,” or “Book of Emerging Forth into the Light.” According to ancient Egyptian beliefs, it was the *ba* (the free-ranging spirit aspect of the deceased) that went “forth by day” into the underworld and afterlife, while the *ka* (life force) remained in the tomb.

Despite the word “book” in the common title, the *Book of the Dead* was actually printed on scrolls, as opposed to bound texts. The text, placed in the coffin or burial chamber of the deceased, consisted of magic spells intended to assist a deceased person’s journey through the *Duat*, or underworld, and into the afterlife. At present, some 192 spells are known, though no single manuscript contains all of them. The spells served a range of purposes, such as giving the deceased mystical knowledge in the afterlife, guiding them past obstacles in the underworld, or protecting them from various hostile forces. In total, the spells in the *Book of the Dead* provide vital information regarding ancient Egyptian beliefs on death, interment, and the afterlife.

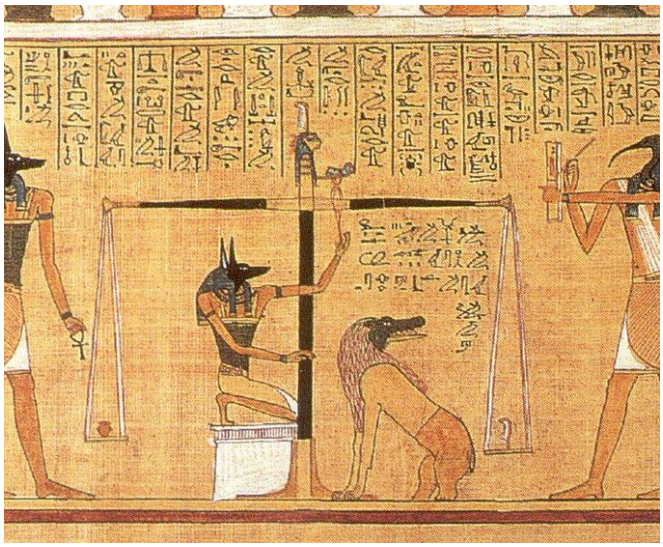
Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts

The *Book of the Dead* was part of a tradition of funerary texts which includes the earlier Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom and the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom. However, it differed from its predecessors in many ways. For instance, Pyramid Texts were written in an unusual hieroglyphic style , were exclusive to those of royal privilege, and saw the afterlife as being in the sky. The Coffin Texts used a newer version of the language, included illustrations for the first time, and were available to wealthy private individuals. Both were painted onto walls or objects in the funerary chamber. The *Book of the Dead*, in contrast , was painted on expensive papyrus, written in cursive hieroglyph, and saw the afterlife as being part of the underworld. The earliest examples developed towards the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period, around 1700 BCE, and included new spells among older texts. By the Seventeenth Dynasty , the spells were typically inscribed on linen shrouds wrapped around the dead, though occasionally they are found written on coffins or on papyrus.

The Book of the Dead

The New Kingdom saw the *Book of the Dead* develop and spread further. The famous “Spell 125,” the Weighing of the Heart, is first known from the reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III (c.1475 BCE). In “Spell 125,” the heart of the deceased must be weighed against the Feather of Truth before the deceased can pass into the afterlife. The jackal-headed god Anubis weighed the heart, while the ibis-headed god Thoth recorded the results. A heavy heart indicated sin and resulted in the deceased being devoured by a crocodile-like creature named Ammit. On the other hand, a lightweight heart equal with the weight of the feather allowed the deceased to enter the afterlife and enjoy an eternity that, although plentiful, required manual labor. For this reason, the *Book of the Dead* included spells for statuettes called *shebti* (later *ushebti*) to perform in the deceased’s place.

From the fourteenth century BCE onward, the *Book of the Dead* was typically written on a papyrus scroll and the text was illustrated with elaborate and lavish vignettes. Later in the Third Intermediate Period, the *Book of the Dead* started to appear in hieratic script as well as in the traditional hieroglyphics. The last use of the *Book of the Dead* was in the first century BCE, though some artistic motifs drawn from it were still in use in Roman times.

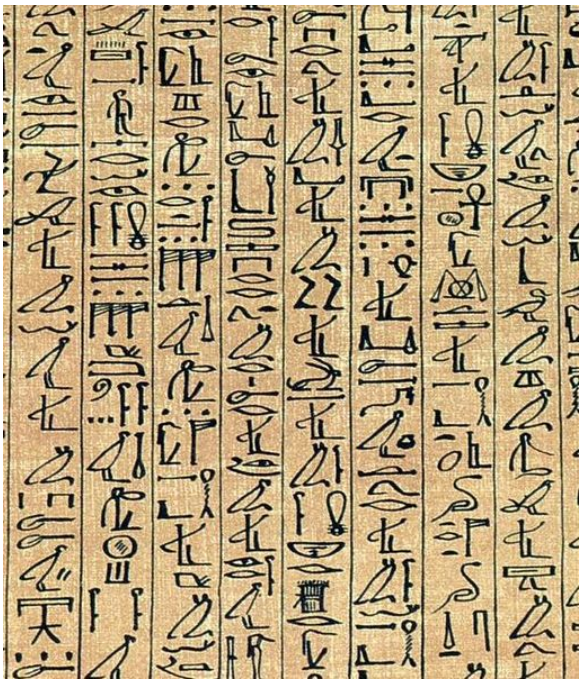


The Weighing of the Heart: In Spell 125, Anubis weighs the heart of Hunefer. This spell is first known from the reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III, c. 1475 BC.

There was no single *Book of the Dead*, and works tended to vary widely. Some people seem to have commissioned their own copies, perhaps choosing the spells they thought were most vital in their own progression to the afterlife. Later in the Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasties, however, the Book was revised and standardized, with spells consistently ordered and numbered for the first time.

Books were commissioned by people in preparation for their own funeral, or by the relatives of someone recently deceased. They were written by scribes, and sometimes the work of several different scribes was literally pasted together. Composed of joined sheets of papyrus, the dimensions of a *Book of the Dead* could vary from one to 40 meters. Books were often prefabricated in funerary workshops, with space left for when the name of the deceased would be written in later.

The text of a New Kingdom *Book of the Dead* was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs, most often from left to right, but also sometimes from right to left. The hieroglyphs were in columns separated by black lines , and illustrations were put in frames above, below, or between the columns of text. The text was written in both black and red ink from either carbon or ochre , respectively. The style and nature of the vignettes used to illustrate a *Book of the Dead* varies widely: some contain lavish color illustrations, even making use of gold leaf , while others contain only line drawings or a simple illustration at the opening.



Cursive hieroglyphs from the Papyrus of Ani: During the New Kingdom, the *Book of the Dead* was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs.

Sculpture of the New Kingdom

Sculpture in the New Kingdom continued in the traditional style until undergoing a drastic shift during the Amarna period.

Learning Objectives

Summarize ancient Egyptian sculpture during the New Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Traditionally, all Egyptian reliefs were painted.
- The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunk relief , which is well suited to very bright sunlight.
- Statues typically depicted Egyptian pharaohs, often representing them as gods.
- Amarna art is characterized by a sense of movement and activity in images, with figures being more realistically (less idealistically) depicted.

Key Terms

- **sunk relief**:A type of artwork in which an image is made by cutting the relief sculpture itself into a flat surface.
- **relief**:A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.

Sculpture in the New Kingdom continued in the traditional Egyptian style , with many great works produced by pharaohs over the years. However, during the later Amarna period, it underwent a drastic shift in style to emphasize more naturalistic (and less idealistic) human figures, such as those with drooping bellies. While reliefs and sculptures in the round continued to be painted, the skin tones of male and female figures was now the same value of brown. Some scholars believe that the shift was due to a new group of artists whose training was different from those trained in the traditional methods at Karnak.

Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut's (1508–1458 BCE) construction of statues was so prolific that, today, almost every major museum in the world has a statue of hers among their collections. While some statues show her in typically feminine attire, others depict her in the royal

ceremonial attire. The physical aspect of the gender of pharaohs was rarely stressed in the art, and with few exceptions, subjects were idealized. The Osirian statues of Hatshepsut, located at her tomb, follow the Egyptian tradition of depicting the dead pharaoh as the god Osiris. However, many of the official statues commissioned by Hatshepsut show her less symbolically, and more naturally, as a woman in typical dresses of the nobility of her day.

Detail of Hatshepsut (c. 1473–1458 BCE): Hatshepsut is depicted in the clothing of a male king, though with a feminine form—differing from the Osirian statues in which she appears much more androgynous.

Ramses II

Statues typically depicted Egyptian pharaohs, often representing them as gods. In the famous sculptures outside the main temple at Abu Simbel, Ramses II (1303–1213 BCE) is depicted in a row of four colossal statues. Other deities are frequently shown in paintings and reliefs. Most of the larger sculpture survives from Egyptian temples or tombs, where massive statues were built to represent gods and pharaohs and their queens.

Colossal statues of Ramses II outside of Abu Simbel: This famous work depicts four repeating statues of Ramses II, following the tradition of deifying pharaohs.

Amarna Art

The style of sculpture shifted drastically during the Amarna Period in the late Eighteenth Dynasty , when Pharaoh Akhenaten moved the capital to the city of Amarna. This art is characterized by a sense of movement and activity in images, with figures having raised heads, many figures overlapping, and many scenes full and crowded. Sunken relief was widely used. Figures are depicted less idealistically and more realistically, with an elongation and narrowing of the neck; sloping of the forehead and nose; prominent chin; large ears and lips; spindle-like arms and calves; and large thighs, stomachs, and hips. For example, many depictions of Akhenaten's body show him with wide hips, a drooping stomach, thick lips, and thin arms and legs. This is a divergence from the earlier Egyptian art which shows men with perfectly chiseled bodies, and there is generally a more "feminine" quality in male figures. Some scholars suggest that the presentation of the human body as imperfect during the Amarna period is in deference to Aten.

Artist's sketch: *Walk In The Garden*; limestone, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, c. 1335 BC: A relief of a royal couple in the Armana style. The figures are thought to be Akhenaten and Nefertiti, Smenkhkare and Meritaten, or Tutankhamen and Ankhesenamun.

Like previous works, faces on reliefs continued to be shown exclusively in profile. The illustration of figures' hands and feet showed great detail, with fingers and toes depicted as long and slender. The skin color of both males and females was generally dark brown, in contrast to the previous tradition of depicting women with lighter skin. Along with traditional court scenes, intimate scenes were often portrayed. In a relief of Akhenaten, he is shown with his primary wife, Nefertiti, and their children in an intimate setting. His children are shrunken to appear smaller than their parents, a routine stylistic feature of traditional Egyptian art.

Relief portrait of Akhenaten (c. 1345 BCE): Akhenaten represented in the typical Amarna period style.

While the religious changes of the Amarna period were brief, the styles introduced to sculpture had a lasting influence on Egyptian culture .

Painting of the New Kingdom

Painting for much of the New Kingdom continued to follow established conventions. However, significant changes to the human form emerged during the Amarna Period.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Egyptian painting in the New Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- For much of the New Kingdom, paintings continued in the conventions established during the Early Dynastic Period .
- Paintings in tombs continued to be made with the intent of making a pleasant afterlife for the deceased.
- During the Amarna Period, human figures were produced in a more naturalistic and less idealized manner than figures from earlier eras.
- The decoration of Amarna Period tombs for non-royals was quite different from previous eras and clearly worshiped the Aten over other gods and goddesses.

Key Terms

- **Aten**:
  The supreme sun disk that assumed the apex of the Egyptian pantheon under Akhenaten's religious reforms.

Painters for much of the New Kingdom continued to depict the human figure in largely the same manner as their predecessors in previous eras. A significant change, however, occurred during the Amarna Period under the pharaoh Akhenaten (r. 1351–1334 BCE), when the body assumed a less idealized form . While many theories exist as to why this change occurred, the exact reason remains unknown.

TT52

The tomb known as TT52 houses an official named Nakht and his wife Tawy (14th century BCE). Among the decorations are richly colored paintings that depict the couple in the standard 18 fists-high profile pose, frontal torso, outward palms pose. As in paintings of previous eras, both figures are the same height. Their skin tones also follow the traditions that depict men with dark brown skin and women with light yellow skin.

Nakht and Tawy making an offering: The figures in this painting continue the conventions established during the Early Dynastic Period.

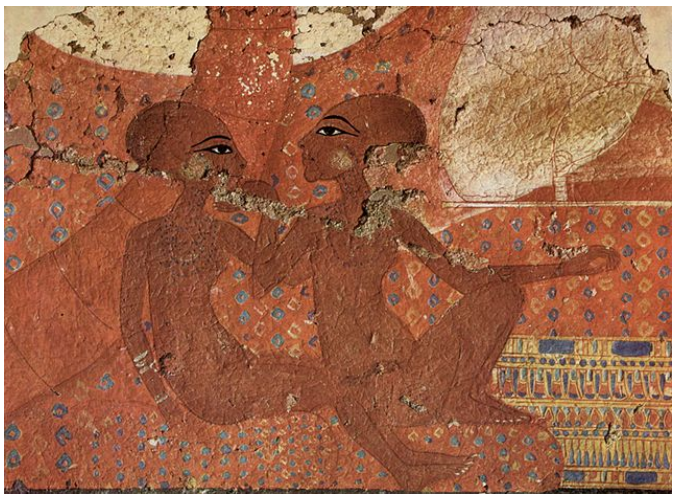
Elsewhere in the tomb, Nakht assumes a more dynamic (albeit still stylized) pose as he hunts and fishes, a convention that also follows the style established during the Early Dynastic Period.

Nakht hunting and fishing in the afterlife: The figures in these paintings convey a sense of dynamism, albeit still stylized as in the past.

During the New Kingdom, religious scenes comprise the majority of paintings in the tombs of the elite. This trend, echoed in the decorative objects in these tombs, is evident in the painting of Nakht and Tawy making an offering . However, scenes from everyday life, such as hunting and fishing, remain an important part of the imagery .

Amarna-Style Painting

Art from this period is characterized by a sense of increased movement and activity in images, with busy and crowded scenes and many of the figures overlapping. Male and female figures are depicted with the same dark brown skin tone, a departure from the past in which women are depicted with lighter skin tones. The human body is portrayed more realistically, rather than idealistically, though at times depictions border on caricature. For example, many depictions of Akhenaten's body show him with wide hips, a drooping stomach, thick lips, and thin arms and legs. This is a divergence from the earlier Egyptian art which shows men with perfectly chiseled bodies, and there is generally a more "feminine" quality in male figures. Some scholars suggest that the presentation of the human body as imperfect during the Amarna period is in deference to the Aten.



Akhenaten's daughters: Following the conventions of the Amarna Period, the figures in this painting have protruding bellies, overlap one another, and appear more relaxed than figures in previous eras. Although the depicted figures are girls, their skin tone is the same as their male counterparts.

Non-Elite Tombs

Although many non-elite tombs from the New Kingdom were plundered, leaving few images and objects for modern scholars to study, it is evident that the decoration was quite different from previous eras. These tombs did not feature any funerary or

agricultural scenes. Images of the tomb occupant were also absent, with the exception of instances in which he or she was depicted with a member of the royal family. Decorations from the Amarna Period clearly worshiped the Aten, with excerpts from the *Hymn to the Aten* often present in the tombs. There is an absence of other gods and goddesses and no mention of Osiris or the underworld.
CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Ramesseum-Cour_et_Colosse.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=134275. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tut tomb.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt.KV62.01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Il tempio di Hatshepsut. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Il_tempio_di_Hatshepsut.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Karnakpanorama. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karnakpanorama.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Karnakfrieze1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karnakfrieze1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Great Hypostyle Hall . **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Hypostyle_Hall. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortuary_Temple_of_Hatshepsut. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/hypostyle-hall. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Karnak. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnak. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ramses II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramses_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Valley Of The Kings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Valley_Of_The_Kings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Luxor Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxor_Temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- frieze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/frieze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pylon. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pylon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ramesseum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesseum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hatshepsut. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10736. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tutankhamun and Ramses II. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/7334. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Weighing of the heart3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Weighing_of_the_heart3.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Papyrus Ani curs hiero. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Papyrus_Ani_curs_hiero.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- papyrus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/papyrus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- hieratic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hieratic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Book of the Dead. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_the_dead. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 345px-ReliefPortraitOfAkhenaten01.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ReliefPortraitOfAkhenaten01.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Spaziergang im Garten Amarna Berlin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Spaziergang_im_Garten_Amarna_Berlin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Ancient Egypt-Antico Egitto-Abu Simbel-Ramses II-DSC00534. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Egypt-Antico_Egitto-Abu_Simbel-Ramses_II-DSC00534.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hatshepsut.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hatshepsut.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/sunk-relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ramesses II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesses_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hatchepsut. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10736. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Akhenaton and the Amarna Period. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10738. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Amarna Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 456px-tomb-of-nakht-282-29.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2416341. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 429px-Tomb_of_Nakht_(8).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2416395. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Akhenaten's daughters.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=146255%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Amarna Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Akhenaton and the Amarna Period. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10738. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- TT52. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/TT52. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Akhenaten. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhenaten. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Egyptian Funerary Practices. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_funerary_practices. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 4.5: The New Kingdom is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

4.6: Late Egyptian Art

Late Egyptian Art

The Late Period of Ancient Egypt (664–332 BCE) marked a maintenance of artistic tradition with subtle changes in the representation of the human form.

Learning Objectives

Describe art in the Late Period of Ancient Egypt

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Though foreigners ruled Ancient Egypt during the Late Period , Egyptian culture was more prevalent than ever.
- Some sculptures of the Late Period maintain traditional techniques, while others feature more naturalistic attributes.
- One major contribution from the Late Period of ancient Egypt was the Brooklyn Papyrus . This was a medical papyrus with a collection of medical and magical remedies for victims of snakebites based on snake type or symptoms.
- The Thirtieth Dynasty took its artistic style from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty.

Key Terms

- **Late Period**:The time of Ancient Egypt between the Third Intermediate Period until the conquest by Alexander the Great, from 664 BCE until 332 BCE; often regarded as the last gasp of the Egyptian culture.

The Late Period of ancient Egypt refers to the last flowering of native Egyptian rulers after the Third Intermediate Period from the Twenty-Sixth Saite Dynasty into Persian conquests, and ended with the conquest by Alexander the Great and establishment of the Ptolemaic Kingdom. It ran from 664 BC until 332 BCE. Though foreigners ruled the country at this time, Egyptian culture was more prevalent than ever. Libyans and Persians alternated rule with native Egyptians. Despite continued conventions in art, some notable changes in the human form did arise. The sculpture (pictured below) of the god Horus as a child (664–332 BCE) represents a combination of the typical stylized stance of Egyptian statuary with a fleshier body and pensive gesture of the right hand and arm.

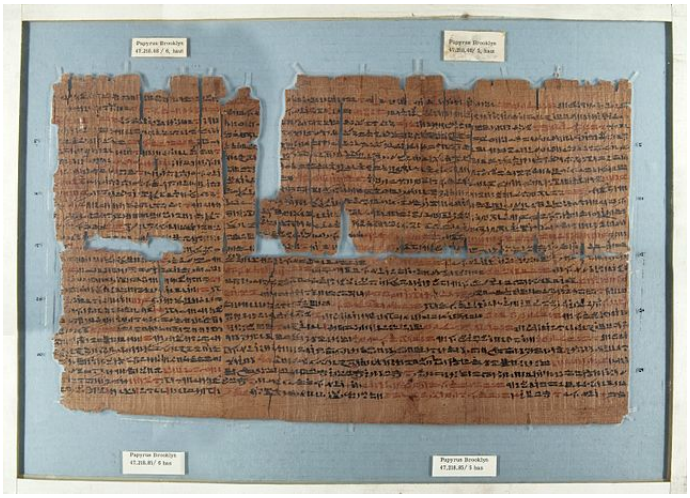
Horus as a Child (664–332 BCE)

The Late Period is often regarded as the last gasp of a once great culture, during which the power of Egypt steadily diminished.

Twenty-Sixth Dynasty

The Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, also known as the Saite Dynasty, reigned from 672–525 BCE. Canal construction from the Nile to the Red Sea began. According to Jeremiah, during this time many Jews came to Egypt, fleeing after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 BCE). Jeremiah and other Jewish refugees arrived in Lower Egypt, notably in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis. Some refugees also settled at Elephantine and other settlements in Upper Egypt (Jeremiah 43 and 44). Jeremiah mentions pharaoh Apries (as Hophra, Jeremiah 44:30) whose reign came to a violent end in 570 BCE. This and other migrations during the Late Period likely contributed to some notable changes in art.

One major contribution from the Late Period of ancient Egypt was the Brooklyn Papyrus. This was a medical papyrus with a collection of medical and magical remedies for victims of snakebites based on snake type or symptoms.



Brooklyn Papyrus (c. 450 BCE): This papyrus provides the most striking evidence for the closely parallel roles of the physician *swnw* and the various priests concerned with healing.

Artwork during this time was representative of animal cults and animal mummies . The faience sculpture below shows the god Pataikos wearing a scarab beetle on his head, supporting two human-headed birds on his shoulders, holding a snake in each hand, and standing atop crocodiles. The style of this sculpture marks a departure from its predecessors in its fleshiness, positioning of its arms and hands, and slight smile.

Figure of Pataikos (664–630 BCE): This glazed faience sculpture of the god Pataikos shows a somewhat naturalistic departure from traditional depictions of Egyptian deities.

Despite the changes that took place in the sculpture of Pataikos, artists continued to use the traditional canon of proportions. A sunken relief from a chapel at Karnak depicting Psamtik III, the final pharaoh of this dynasty, displays the maintenance of traditional conventions in representing the body.

Relief of Psamtik III at a chapel in Karnak: Despite changes in the sculptures of Horus and Pataikos, this image of the last pharaoh of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty appears in the more traditional stylized form.

Twenty-Seventh Dynasty

The First Achaemenid Period (525–404 BCE) marked the conquest of Egypt by the Persian Empire under Cambyses II. In May 525 BCE, Cambyses defeated Psamtik III in the Battle of Pelusium in the eastern Nile Delta. This basalt portrait bust (pictured below) of an unknown Egyptian dignitary from the period shows little change from convention in the representation of the human form. His necklace is typical of those made in the Achaemenid Period.

Statue of an Egyptian dignitary from the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty: The necklace on this dignitary has been identified as typical of the era of Persian occupation.

Twenty-Eighth through Thirtieth Dynasties

The Twenty-Eighth Dynasty consisted of a single king, Amyrtaeus, prince of Sais, who rebelled against the Persians and briefly re-established indigenous Egyptian rule. He left no monuments with his name. This dynasty reigned for six years, from 404–398 BCE. The Twenty-Ninth Dynasty ruled from Mendes, from 398–380 BCE.

The Thirtieth Dynasty took the art style from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. A series of three pharaohs ruled from 380 BCE until their final defeat in 343 BCE led to the reoccupation by the Persians. Art featuring Nectanebo II, the final ruler of this dynasty, appears

largely in the traditional Egyptian style. Except for the small-scale greywacke (sandstone) statue in the Metropolitan Museum, which shows him standing before the image of Horus as a falcon, no other annotated portraits of the pharaoh are known.

Horus and Nectanebo II (360–343 BCE): This is believed to be the only surviving annotated sculpture of the last pharaoh of the Thirtieth Dynasty.

A fragment of Nectanebo II's portrait, with its partial smile and sagging chin, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, is slightly more naturalistic than previous representations of pharaohs.

Head of Nectanebo II : This portrait features a combination of traditional and naturalistic features.

Art and Architecture in the Kingdom of Kush

The Kingdom of Kush was an ancient African state whose art and architecture were inspired by Egyptian design, but were distinctly African.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the influence of both Egyptian and African art on the art produced by the Kingdom of Kush

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Kushite pharaohs built and restored many temples and monuments throughout the Nile Valley, and the construction of Kushite pyramids became widespread.
- The Kushites used relief sculpture to decorate the walls of palaces and pyramids. The cuts used were deeper and more strategic than Egyptian hieroglyphics . The reliefs mostly depict scenes from African daily life, animals, battle scenes, and kings.
- Kushite portrait sculpture adopts some Egyptian attributes but emphasizes distinctly indigenous features, such as wide faces and unique regalia, hairstyles, and symbolism.
- Pottery was an important Kushite craft and consisted mostly of pots and bowls that were shaped from clay and then painted in many different colors. Common decorative motifs included animals and geometric and plant-based patterns.
- The kings of Kush adopted the Egyptian architectural idea of building stone pyramids as funerary monuments. However, Kushite pyramids were built above the underground graves, whereas the Egyptian graves were inside the pyramid.

Key Terms

- **relief**:A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.
- **pyramid**:An ancient massive construction with a square or rectangular base and four triangular sides meeting in an apex, such as those built as tombs in Egypt or as bases for temples in Mesoamerica.

The Kingdom of Kush was an ancient African state situated on the confluences of the Blue Nile, White Nile, and River Atbara in what is now the Republic of Sudan.

Africa in 400 BCE: Map of kingdoms, states, and tribes in 400 BCE Africa.

Established after the Bronze Age collapse and the disintegration of the New Kingdom of Egypt, Kush was centered at Napata in modern day northern Sudan in its early phase, and then moved further south to Meroë in 591 BCE. After king Kashta invaded Egypt in the eighth century BCE, the Kushite kings ruled as Pharaohs of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty of Egypt for a century, until they were expelled by Psamtik I in 656 BCE. The reign of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty ushered in a renaissance period for ancient Egypt, and art and architecture emulating the styles of the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms flourished. Kushite pharaohs built and restored many temples and monuments throughout the Nile Valley, and the construction of Kushite pyramids became widespread. Some of these are still standing in modern Sudan.

Kushite Arts

The Kushite arts were inspired by the Egyptians, but were drastically African. Most remarkable among these was Kushite relief sculpture, which adorned the walls of palaces or pyramids. The cuts that are on the walls are deeper and more strategic than Egyptian hieroglyphics. There are many reliefs scattered across the land of Africa. They mostly depict scenes from African daily life and animals. Reliefs depicting battle scenes or kings are somewhat less common.

Statues of rulers and other royal individuals emphasize the foreign, non-Egyptian origin of their subjects. The *Head of a Kushite Ruler* (c. 716-702 BCE), identified by some scholars as King Shabaqa, depicts a man with a typically round Kushite face. Although his eyes bear resemblance to those of Egyptian individuals in art, his hairstyle and regalia are distinctly non-Egyptian. The front of

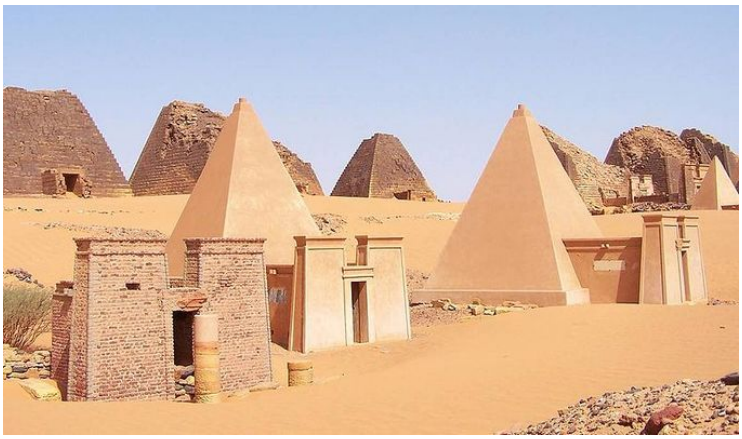
his headband once featured two cobras. While Egyptian pharaohs commonly wore a single cobra on their headgear, the double-cobra motif was unique to the Kushite culture .

Head of a Kushite Ruler (c. 716–702 BCE): This sculpture combines Egyptian and unique Kushite attributes.

Pottery was another important Kushite craft and consisted mostly of pots and bowls that were shaped from clay and then painted in many different colors. Most pottery was initially made for the wealthy, but later on, many commoners also began using pottery in their households. While decoration usually took the form of painted designs, some types of pottery also had stamped designs. Common motifs included geometric and plant-based patterns. The finest pottery was decorated with paintings of animals, such as giraffes, antelopes, frogs, crocodiles, snakes, and a variety of birds.

Kushite Architecture

The kings of Kush adopted the Egyptian architectural idea of building pyramids as funerary monuments. However, Kushite pyramids were built above the underground graves, whereas the Egyptian graves were inside the pyramid. The kings' tombs were lodged under large pyramids made of stone. For a short time, the Kushite kings were mummified. Ordinary citizens were buried in much smaller pyramids. The most famous examples of Kushite pyramids are located in their capital Meroë. There are three cemeteries in Meroë; the north and south cemeteries are royal cemeteries and house the pyramids of kings and queens, whereas the west cemetery is a purely non-royal site.



Sudan Meroë pyramids : Sudan Meroë pyramids — UNESCO World Heritage.

Egyptian Art After Alexander the Great

Hellenistic art, richly diverse in subject matter and in stylistic development, characterized culture after Alexander the Great.

Learning Objectives

Describe the major events of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the key characteristics of Hellenistic art

Key Takeaways

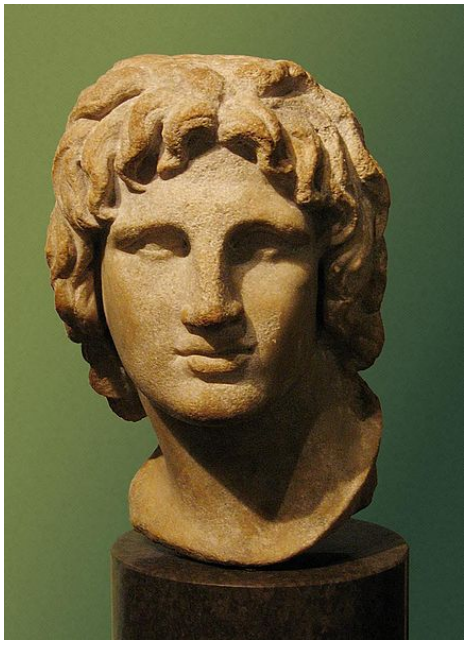
Key Points

- The Ptolemaic Kingdom (332–30 BCE) in and around Egypt began following Alexander the Great ‘s conquest in 332 BCE and ended with the death of Cleopatra VII and the Roman conquest in 30 BCE.
- Hellenistic art is richly diverse in subject matter and in stylistic development. It was created during an age characterized by a strong sense of history. For the first time, there were museums and great libraries, such as those at Alexandria and Pergamon.
- Prominent in Hellenistic art are representations of Dionysos, the god of wine and legendary conqueror of the East, as well as those of Hermes, the god of commerce. In strikingly tender depictions, Eros, the Greek personification of love, is portrayed as a young child.
- Hellenistic civilization continued to thrive even after Rome annexed Egypt after the battle of Actium and did not decline until the Islamic conquests.
- Portraits of male rulers grew increasingly naturalistic, while those of female rulers and non-elites remained stylized .

Key Terms

- **Hellenic**:Referring to the ancient Greek world.
- **Alexander the Great**:Alexander the Great was a king of Macedon, a state in northern ancient Greece. Born in Pella in 356 BCE, Alexander was tutored by Aristotle until the age of 16. By the age of 30, he had created one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from the Ionian Sea to the Himalayas. He was undefeated in battle and is considered one of history’s most successful commanders.

The Ptolemaic Kingdom (332–30 BCE) in and around Egypt began following Alexander the Great’s conquest in 332 BCE and ended with the death of Cleopatra VII and the Roman conquest in 30 BCE. It was founded when Ptolemy I Soter declared himself Pharaoh of Egypt, creating a powerful Hellenistic state stretching from southern Syria to Cyrene and south to Nubia. Alexandria became the capital city and a center of Greek culture and trade.



Alexander the Great bust: Portrait of Alexander the Great, said to be from Alexandria, Egypt. Marble, second to first century BC.

Hellenistic Art

Hellenistic art is richly diverse in subject matter and in stylistic development. It was created during an age characterized by a strong sense of history. For the first time, there were museums and great libraries, such as those at Alexandria and Pergamon. Hellenistic artists copied and adapted earlier styles , and also made great innovations. Representations of Greek gods took on new forms . The popular image of a nude Aphrodite, for example, reflects the increased secularization of traditional religion. Also prominent in Hellenistic art are representations of Dionysos, the god of wine and legendary conqueror of the East, as well as those of Hermes, the god of commerce. In strikingly tender depictions, Eros, the Greek personification of love, is portrayed as a young child.

Eros Sleeping (Hellenistic, specific date unknown): Nudity in sculptures of gods like Eros signified an increasing humanization of deities during the Hellenistic era.

Encouraged by the many pharaohs, Greek colonists set up the trading post of Naucratis, which became an important link between the Greek world and Egypt's grain. As Egypt came under foreign domination and decline, the pharaohs depended on the Greeks as mercenaries and even advisers. When the Persians took over Egypt, Naucratis remained an important Greek port, and the colonists were used as mercenaries by both the rebel Egyptian princes and the Persian kings, who later gave them land grants, spreading the Greek culture into the valley of the Nile . When Alexander the Great arrived, he established Alexandria on the site of the Persian fort of Rhakortis. Following Alexander's death, control passed into the hands of the Lagid (Ptolemaic) dynasty ; they built Greek cities across their empire and gave land grants across Egypt to the veterans of their many military conflicts. Hellenistic civilization continued to thrive even after Rome annexed Egypt after the battle of Actium and did not decline until the Islamic conquests.

Nile Mosaic of Palestrina (c. 100 BCE)

One significant change in Ptolemaic art is the sudden re-appearance of women, who had been absent since about the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. This phenomenon was likely due, in part, to the increasing importance of women as rulers and co-regents, as in the case of the series of Cleopatras. Although women were present in artwork, they were shown less realistically than men in the this era, as is evident in a portrait of a Ptolemaic queen (possibly Cleopatra VII) from the first century BCE. Unlike its Classical and Hellenistic counterparts elsewhere in the Hellenic world, this sculpture bears a more stylized appearance.

Sculpture of a Ptolemaic Queen, possibly Cleopatra VII (c. 50–30 BCE): Despite a growing naturalism among portraits of male elites, those of women remained stylized.

Among male rulers, portraiture assumed a more naturalistic appearance, even when the sitter was pictured in traditional Egyptian regalia, as in a relief of Ptolemy IV Philopator (r. 221–204 BCE), who wears the traditional pharaonic crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. However, even with this Greek influence on art, the notion of the individual portrait still had not supplanted Egyptian artistic norms among non-elites during the Ptolemaic Dynasty.

Ptolemy VI Philometor (c. 186–145 BCE): In this relief from a ring, Ptolemy VI wears the traditional white and red dual crown of Upper and Lower Egypt while displaying the naturalistic and individualized facial features typical of Classical and Hellenistic portraiture.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 640px-Roll,_664_-_332_B.C.E._Brooklyn_Papyrus_47.218.48a-f.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=33288717. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 480px-Head_of_Nectanebo_II-MBA_Lyon_H1701-IMG_0204.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15270671. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Karnak_Psammetique_III.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3577107. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Statue_dignitary_27th_dynasty_Florence.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36455543. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 215px-HorusAndNectaneboII_MetropolitanMuseum.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1745992. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Horus_as_a_child-MBA_Lyon_H1704-IMG_0155.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15185913. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 344px-Figure_of_Pataikos,_664-30_B.C.E._Faience,_glazed,37.949E.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=33295232. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nectanebo II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nectanebo_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Statue: Dignitary 27th Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_dignitary_27th_dynasty_Florence.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Late Period of Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Period_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Brooklyn Papyrus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn_Papyrus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Twenty-Seventh Dynasty of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-seventh_Dynasty_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Twenty-Sixth Dynasty of Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-sixth_dynasty_of_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Psamtik III. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Psamtik_III. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Late Period. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/late-period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of Ancient Egypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_ancient_Egypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 488px-Head_of_a_Kushite_Ruler,_ca._716-702_B.C.E..jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36343528. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Africa in 400 BC. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Africa_in_400_BC.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sudan Meroe Pyramids 30sep2005 2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sudan_Meroe_Pyramids_30sep2005_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nubian Pyramids. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nubian_pyramids. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African Kingdoms. **Provided by**: bmssancientcivilizations Wikispace. **Located at**: bmssancientcivilizations.wikispaces.com/African+Kingdoms. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kingdom of Kush. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Kush. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pyramid. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pyramid. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 370px-Ring_with_engraved_portrait_of_Ptolemy_VI_Philometor_(3rdu20132nd_century_BCE)_-_2009.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6185029. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Ptolemaic_Queen_(Cleopatra_VII-),_50-30_B.C.E.,_71.12.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34005509. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-0_Eros_dormiente_-_Musei_Capitolini_-_MC1157 (1).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26244388%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- NileMosaicOfPalestrina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NileMosaicOfPalestrina.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- AlexanderTheGreat Bust. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AlexanderTheGreat_Bust.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nile mosaic of Palestrina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_mosaic_of_Palestrina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Greco-Roman. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Roman. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ptolemaic Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemaic_Kingdom%23Art_during_the_Ptolemies. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Alexander the Great. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 4.6: Late Egyptian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Art of the Aegean Civilizations

5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age

5.2: Minoan Art

5.3: Mycenaean Art

This page titled 5: Art of the Aegean Civilizations is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age

Sculpture of the Cyclades

Cycladic art during the Greek Bronze Age is noted for its abstract, geometric designs of male and female figures.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the form and function of the Cycladic marble figurines

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Cyclades are a chain of Greek islands in the middle of the Aegean Sea. They encircle the island of Delos.
- Cycladic marble figurines of abstract male and female forms have been found at burial sites. These figurines are small, abstract, and rely on geometric shapes and flat plans for their design and would have been painted.
- The female figurines depict a woman with her legs together and arms folded over her abdomen, with her breasts and pubic region emphasized.
- The male figures are often depicted sitting in a chair and playing a harp or a lyre .

Key Terms

- **incised**:To mark or cut the surface of an object for decoration.
- **Cycladic**:Of, or relating to the Cyclades.

The Cyclades are a group of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea that encircle the island of Delos. The islands were known for their white marble, mined during the Greek Bronze Age and throughout Classical history.

Their geographical location placed them, like the island of Crete, in the center of trade between Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Near East. The indigenous civilization on the Cyclades reached its high point during the Bronze Age. The islands were later occupied by the Minoans, Mycenaeans, and later the Greeks.

Map of the Cyclades islands: A map marking the Cyclades islands.

Cycladic Sculptures

Cycladic art is best known for its small-scale, marble figurines. From the late fourth millennium BCE to the early second millennium BCE, Cycladic sculptures went through a series of stylistic shifts, with their bodily forms varying from geometric to

organic. The purpose of these figurines is unknown, although all that have been discovered were located in graves. While it is clear that they were regularly used in funerary practices, their precise function remains a mystery.

Some are found in graves completely intact, others are found broken into pieces, others show signs of being used during the lifetime of the deceased, but some graves do not contain the figurines. Furthermore, the figurines were buried equally between men and women. The male and female forms do not seem to be identified with a specific gender during burial. These figures are based in simple geometric shapes.

Cycladic Female Figures

The abstract female figures all follow the same mold. Each is a carved statuette of a nude woman with her arms crossed over her abdomen. The bodies are roughly triangular and the feet are kept together. The head of the women is an inverted triangle with a rounded chin and the nose of the figurine protrudes from the center.

Each figure has modeled breasts, and incised lines draw attention to the pubic region with a triangle. The swollen bellies on some figurines might indicate pregnancy or symbolic fertility. The incised lines also provide small details, such as toes on the feet, and to delineate the arms from each other and the stomach.

Their flat back and inability to stand on their carved feet suggest that these figures were meant to lie down. While today they are featureless and remain the stark white of the marble, traces of paint allow us to know that they were once colored. Paint would have been applied on the face to demarcate the eyes, mouth, and hair. Dots were used to decorate the figures with bracelets and necklaces.

Cycladic female figure: A Cycladic female figure. Marble. Cyclades, Greece. c. 2500 BCE

Cycladic Male Figures

Male figures are also found in Cycladic grave sites. These figures differ from the females, as the male typically sits on a chair and plays a musical instrument, such as the pipes or a harp. Harp players, like the one in the example below, play the frame harp, a Near

Eastern ancestor of the modern harp.

The figures, their chairs, and instruments are all carved into elegant, cylindrical shapes. Like the female figures, the shape of the male figure is reliant on geometric shapes and flat planes . The incised lines provide details (such as toes), and paint added distinctive features to the now-blank faces.

Cycladic male figure: A Cycladic male figure with the harp. Marble. Santorini, Greece. c. 2500 BCE.

Other Cycladic Figures

While reclining female and seated male figurines are the most common Cycladic sculptures discovered, other forms were produced, such as animals and abstracted humanoid forms. Examples include the terra cotta figurines of bovine animals (possibly oxen or bulls) that date to 2200–2000 BCE, and small, flat sculptures that resemble female figures shaped like violins; these date to the Grotta–Pelos culture , also known as Early Cycladic I (c. 3300–2700 BCE). Like other Cycladic sculptures discovered to date, the purposes of these figurines remain unknown.

Terra cotta figurines (2200–2000 BCE): These bovine figures may be oxen or bulls.

Violin-shaped female figurines (c. 3300–2700 BCE): These flat, abstracted figurines of the female body provide one example of how its representation evolved in Cycladic art.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 640px-MuseAckrotiriItem70-6643-wpd.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2488131. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Violin-shaped_female_cycladic_figurines.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23106250. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Cycladic harp player. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cycladic_harp_player.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Goulandris Master - Cycladic Female Figurine - Walters 23253. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goulandris_Master_-_Cycladic_Female_Figurine_-_Walters_23253.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nomos Kykladon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nomos_Kykladon.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Female Figure of the Late Spedos Type. **Provided by**: The J. Paul Getty Museum. **Located at**: http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/13046/attributed-to-the-schuster-master-female-figure-of-the-late-spedos-type-cycladic-about-2400-bc/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- History of the Cyclades. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Cyclades%23Cycladic_civilisation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cycladic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cycladic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cycladic civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cycladic_civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cyclades. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclades. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- incised. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/incised. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cycladic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Cycladic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Male Harp Player of the Early Spedos Type. **Provided by**: The J. Paul Getty Museum. **Located at**: http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10949/unknown-maker-male-harp-player-of-the-early-spedos-type-cycladic-2700-2300-bc/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Grotta-Pelos Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Grotta-Pelos_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.2: Minoan Art

The Minoans

The Protopalatial period of Minoan civilization (1900 to 1700 BCE) and the Neopalatial Period (1700 to 1450 BCE) saw the establishment of administrative centers on Crete and the apex of Minoan civilization, respectively.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the key elements of the Minoan Propalatial and Neopalatial periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Minoan civilization was named after the mythical King Minos, because the first excavator, Sir Arthur Evans , mistook the many rooms and corridors of the administrative palace of Knossos to be the labyrinth in which Minos kept the Minotaur.
- The Protopalatial period (1900–1700 BCE) saw the establishment of administrative centers on the island of Crete. The identifying features of Minoan civilization—extensive sea trade and the building of communal civic centers—are first seen on the island during this time.
- The Protopalatial period ended in 1700 BCE when the palaces of the island were destroyed and life on the island was significantly disrupted. The unknown cataclysmic event is believed to be either an earthquake or an invasion.
- During the Neopalatial period (1700–1450 BCE), the Minoans recovered from the cataclysm and reached the height of their civilization, eventually controlling the major trade routes in the Mediterranean.

Key Terms

- **labyrinth**: A maze, especially underground or covered.
- **minotaur**: A monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man.
- **Linear A**: A syllabary used to write the as-yet-undeciphered Minoan language, and an apparent predecessor to other scripts.

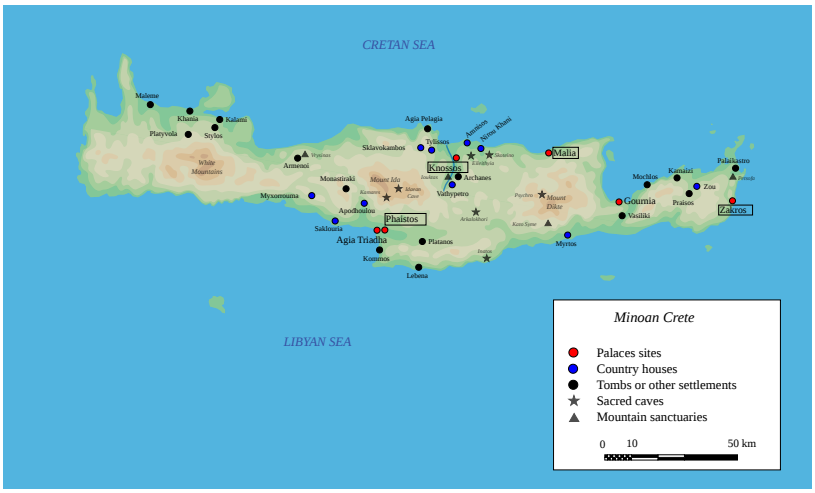
Discovery and Excavation

The ancient sites on the island of Crete were first excavated in the early 1900s by the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans. Evans excavated the site of Knossos, where he discovered a palace. From this fact and related points, he decided to name the civilization after the mythical King Minos.

The many rooms of the palace at Knossos were so oddly shaped and disordered to Evans that they reminded him of the labyrinth of the Minotaur. According to myth, Minos' wife had an illicit union with a white bull, which lead to the birth of a half bull and half man, known as the Minotaur. King Minos had his court artist and inventor, Daedalus, build an inescapable labyrinth for the Minotaur to live in.

Archaeological evidence dates the arrival of the earliest inhabitants of Crete in approximately 6000 BCE. Over the next four thousand years the inhabitants developed a civilization based on agriculture, trade, and production. The Minoan's civilization on Crete existed during the Bronze Age , from 3000 to 1100 BCE , although the Mycenaeans from Greece invaded the island in the mid-1400s BCE and occupied it for the last centuries before the Greek Dark Age.

The Minoans were known as great seafarers. They traded extensively throughout the Mediterranean region.



Map of Minoan Crete: A map of Minoan Crete.

Protopalatial Period

The Protopalatial Period is considered the civilization's second phase of development, lasting from 1900 to 1700 BCE. During this time the major sites on the island were developed, including the palatial sites of Knossos, Phaistos, and Kato Zakros, which were the first palaces or administrative centers built on Crete.

These civic centers appear to denote the emergence of a collective community governing system, instead of system in which a king ruled over each town. During this period the Minoan trade network expanded into Egypt and the Near East; the first signs of writing, the still undeciphered language Linear A , appear. The period ended with a cataclysmic event, perhaps an earthquake or an invasion, which destroyed the palace centers.

Neopalatial Period

The Neopalatial period occurred from 1700 to 1450 BCE, during which time the Minoans saw the height of their civilization. Following the destruction of the first palaces in approximately 1700 BCE, the Minoans rebuilt these centers into the palaces that were first excavated by Sir Arthur Evans.

During this period, Minoan trade increased and the Minoans were considered to rule the Mediterranean trading routes between Greece, Egypt, Anatolia , the Near East, and perhaps even Spain. The Minoans began to settle in colonies away from Crete, including on the islands of the Cyclades, Rhodes, and in Egypt.

Minoan Architecture

Minoan palace centers were divided into numerous zones for civic, storage, and production purposes; they also had a central, ceremonial courtyard.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the architectural design of Minoan palaces

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The palaces excavated on Crete functioned more as administrative centers with rooms for civic functions, storage, workshops, and shrines located around a central, ceremonial courtyard.
- The palaces have no fortification walls, suggesting a lack of enemies and conflict, although the natural surroundings provide a high level of protection, and the multitude of rooms creates a continuous, protective façade .
- Minoan columns were uniquely shaped, constructed from wood, and painted. They are tapered at the bottom, larger at the top, and fitted with a bulbous, pillow-like capital .

- The complex at Phaistos bears many similarities with its counterpart at Knossos, although it is smaller.
- Minoan builders rebuilt new complexes atop older ones in the aftermath of damaging earthquakes.

Key Terms

- **pithoi**: (Singular: pithos) Large storage jars for liquids—oil, wine, and water—and grains.
- **labyrinth**: A maze, especially underground or covered.
- **fresco**: A water-based painting applied to wet or dry plaster.
- **capital**: The topmost part of a column.

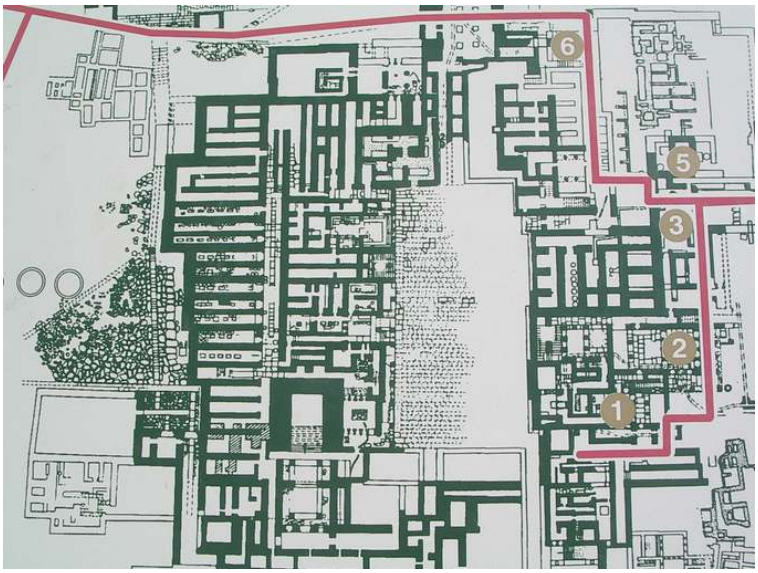
The most well known and excavated architectural buildings of the Minoans were the administrative palace centers.

When Sir Arthur Evans first excavated at Knossos, not only did he mistakenly believe he was looking at the legendary labyrinth of King Minos, he also thought he was excavating a palace. However, the small rooms and excavation of large pithoi , storage vessels , and archives led researchers to believe that these palaces were actually administrative centers. Even so, the name became ingrained, and these large, communal buildings across Crete are known as palaces.

Although each one is unique, they share similar features and functions. The largest and oldest palace centers are at Knossos, Malia, Phaistos, and Kato Zakro.

The Complex at Knossos

The complex at Knossos provides an example of the monumental architecture built by the Minoans. The most prominent feature on the plan is the palace's large, central courtyard. This courtyard may have been the location of large ritual events, including bull leaping, and a similar courtyard is found in every Minoan palace center.



Plan of the palace at Knossos: An overview map of the palace at Knossos, Crete, Greece, circa 1700–1400 BCE.

Several small tripartite shrines surround the courtyard. The numerous corridors and rooms of the palace center create multiple areas for storage, meeting rooms, shrines, and workshops.

The absence of a central room and living chambers suggest the absence of a king and, instead, the presence and rule of a strong, centralized government.

The palaces also have multiple entrances that often take long paths to reach the central courtyard or a set of rooms. There are no fortification walls, although the multitude of rooms creates a protective, continuous façade. While this provides some level of fortification, it also provides structural stability for earthquakes. Even without a wall, the rocky and mountainous landscape of Crete and its location as an island creates a high level of natural protection.

Restored north portico: The rocky and mountainous landscape of Crete creates a high level of natural protection.

The palaces are organized not only into zones along a horizontal plain, but also have multiple stories. Grand staircases, decorated with columns and frescos , connect to the upper levels of the palaces, only some parts of which survive today.

Wells for light and air provide ventilation and light. The Minoans also created careful drainage systems and wells for collecting and storing water, as well as sanitation.

Their architectural columns are uniquely constructed and easily identified as Minoan. They are constructed from wood, as opposed to stone, and are tapered at the bottom. They stood on stone bases and had large, bulbous tops, now known as cushion capitals. The Minoans painted their columns bright red and the capitals were often painted black.

Restored interior stairwell: Palace at Knossos, Crete, Greece. Circa 1700–1400 BCE.

Phaistos

Phaistos was inhabited from about 4000 BCE. A palatial complex, dating from the Middle Bronze Age , was destroyed by an earthquake during the Late Bronze Age. Knossos, along with other Minoan sites, was destroyed at that time. The palace was rebuilt toward the end of the Late Bronze Age.

The first palace was built about 2000 BCE. This section is on a lower level than the west courtyard and has a nice facade with a plastic outer shape, a cobbled courtyard, and a tower ledge with a ramp that leads up to a higher level.

The old palace was destroyed three times in a time period of about three centuries. After the first and second disaster, reconstruction and repairs were made, so there are three, identifiable construction phases. Around 1400 BCE, the invading

Achaeans destroyed Phaistos, as well as Knossos. The palace appears to have been unused thereafter.

The Old Palace was built in the Protopalatial period. When the palace was destroyed by earthquakes, new structures were built atop the old. In one of the three hills of the area, remains from the Neolithic era and the Early Minoan period have been found.

Two additional palaces were built during the Middle and Late Minoan periods. The older one looks like the palace at Knossos, although the Phaistos complex is smaller. On its ruins (probably destroyed by an earthquake around 1600 BCE), the Late-Minoan builders constructed a larger palace had several rooms separated by columns.

Like the complex at Knossos, the complex at Phaistos is arranged around a central courtyard and held grand staircases that led to areas believed to be a theater, ceremonial spaces , and official apartments. Materials such as gypsum and alabaster added to the luxurious appearance of the interior.

View of the complex at Phaistos from the south: A view of the ruins of the complex at Phaistos.

Minoan Painting

Minoan painting is distinguished by its vivid colors and curvilinear shapes that bring a liveliness and vitality to scenes.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between Kamares ware and Marine-style vase painting, and describe Minoan wall paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The fresco known as Bull Leaping, found in the palace of Knossos, is one of the seminal Minoan paintings. It depicts the Minoan culture ‘s fascination with the bull and the unique event of bull leaping—all painted in the distinctive Minoan style .
- The Minoan city of Akrotiri on the island of Thera was destroyed by a volcanic eruption that preserved the wall paintings in the town’s homes. One fresco, known as Flotilla, depicts a highly developed society.
- Kamares ware is pottery made from a fine clay. These vessels are painted with marine scenes and abstract flowers, shapes, and geometric lines .
- Marine-style vase painting depicts marine life and scenes with organic shapes that fill the entire surface of the pot, using a technique known as horror vacui . Unlike Kamares ware, Marine-style scenes are painted in dark colors on a light surface.

Key Terms

- **horror vacui**: Latin, meaning fear of empty space; this is also the name for a style of painting when the entire surface of a space is filled with patterns and figures.
- **fresco**:In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to plaster.

- **buon fresco**:A more durable mural painting technique in which alkaline resistant pigments, ground in water, are applied to plaster when it is still wet, as opposed to fresco-secco when the plaster has been allowed to dry and is remoistened.

Wall Painting

The Minoans decorated their palace complexes and homes with fresco wall paintings. Buon fresco is a form of painting where the pigment is painted onto a wet limestone plaster. When the plaster dries the painting also dries, becoming an integral part of the wall.

In the Minoan variation, the stone walls are first covered with a mixture of mud and straw, then thinly coated with lime plaster, and lastly with layers of fine plaster. The Minoans had a distinct painting style with shapes formed by curvilinear lines that add a feeling of liveliness to the paintings. The Minoan color palette is based in earth tones of white, brown, red, and yellow. Black and vivid blue are also used. These color combinations create vivid and rich decoration.

Because the Minoan alphabet, known as Linear A , has yet to be deciphered, scholars must rely on the culture's visual art to provide insights into Minoan life. The frescoes discovered in locations such as Knossos and Akrotiri inform us of the plant and animal life of the islands of Crete and Thera (Santorini), the common styles of clothing, and the activities the people practiced. For example, men wore kilts and loincloths. Women wore short-sleeve dresses with flounced skirts whose bodices were open to the navel, allowing their breasts to be exposed.

Fresco depicting three women: This fresco from the complex at Knossos depicts a popular fashion for Minoan women.

Knossos

Fragments of frescoes found at Knossos provide us with glimpses into Minoan culture and rituals . A fresco found on an upper story of the palace has come to be known as Bull Leaping. The image depicts a bull in flying gallop with one person at his horns, another at his feet, and a third, whose skin color is brown instead of white, inverted in a handstand leaping over the bull.

While the different skin color of the figures may differentiate male (dark) and female (light) figures, the similarity of their clothing and body shapes (lean with few curves) suggest that the figures may all be male. The figures participate in an activity known as bull-leaping.

The human figures are stylized with narrow waists, broad shoulders, long, slender, muscular legs, and cylindrical arms. Unlike the twisted perspective seen in Egyptian or Ancient Near Eastern works of art, these figures are shown in full profile, an element the adds to the air of liveliness.

Bull Leaping : A fresco found on an upper story of the palace at Knossos, Crete, Greece. Circa 1450–1400 BCE.

Although the specifics of bull leaping remain a matter of debate, it is commonly interpreted as a ritualistic activity performed in connection with bull worship. In most cases, the leaper would literally grab a bull by his horns, which caused the bull to jerk his neck upwardly. This jerking motion gave the leaper the momentum necessary to perform somersaults and other acrobatic tricks or stunts.

Bull Leaping appears to divide these steps between two participants, with a third extending his arms, possibly to catch the leaper.

Thera

The Minoans settled on other islands besides Crete, including the volcanic, Cycladic island of Thera (present-day Santorini). The volcano on Thera erupted in mid-second millennium BCE and destroyed the Minoan city of Akrotiri. Akrotiri was entombed by pumice and ash and since its rediscovery has been referred to as the Minoan Pompeii. The frescoes on Akrotiri were preserved by the blanketing volcanic ash.

The wall paintings found on Thera provide significant information about Minoan life and culture, depicting a highly developed society. A fresco commonly called Flotilla or Akrotiri Ship Procession represents a culture adept at a variety of seafaring occupations.

Differences in clothing styles could refer to different ranks and roles in society. Deer, dolphins, and large felines point to a sense of biodiversity among the islands of the Minoan civilization .

Flotilla or Akrotiri Ship Procession: This panoramic fresco depicts the Minoans as a highly developed civilization.

In one room is a wall painting known as the Landscape with Swallows, or as the Spring Fresco. It depicts a whimsical, hilly landscape with lilies sprouting from the ground . Sparrows, painted in blue, white, and red, swoop around the landscape. The lilies sway gracefully and the hills create an undulating rhythm around the room. The fresco does not depict a naturalistic landscape, but instead depicts an essence of the land and nature, whose liveliness is enhanced through the colors and curvilinear lines.

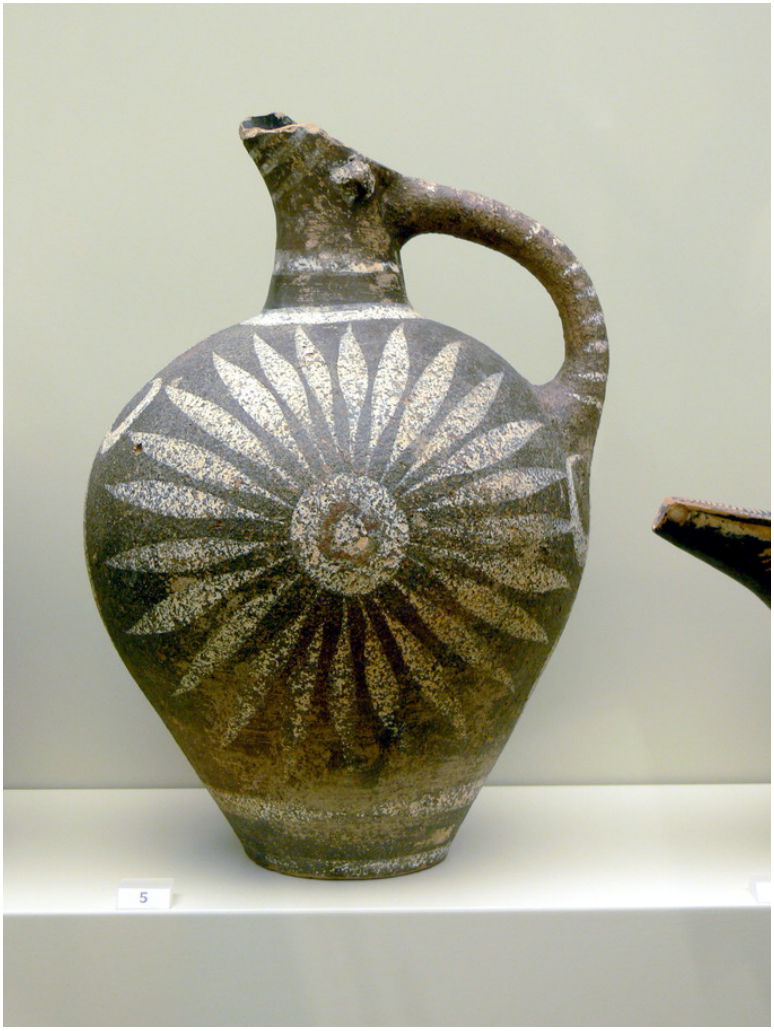
Landscape with Sparrows, or Spring Fresco: Akrotiri, Thera, Greece. c. 1650 BCE.

Vase Painting

Minoan ceramics and vase painting are uniquely stylized and are similar in artistic style to Minoan wall painting. As with Minoan frescoes, themes from nature and marine life are often depicted on their pottery. Similar earth-tone colors are used, including black, white, brown, red, and blue.

Kamares ware, a distinctive type of pottery painted in white, red, and blue over a black backdrop, is created from a fine clay. The paintings depict marine scenes, as well as abstract floral shapes, and they often include abstract lines and shapes, including spirals and waves.

These stylized, floral shapes include lilies, palms, papyrus , and leaves that fill the entire surface of the pot with bold designs. The pottery is named for the location where it was first found in the late nineteenth century—a cave sanctuary at Kamares, on Mount Ida. This style of pottery is found throughout the island of Crete as well in a variety of locations on the Mediterranean.



Kamares ware vessel: This is a Kamares ware vessel with an abstract floral design. Minoan, circa 2100–1700 BCE.

The Marine style emerged during the late Minoan period. As the name suggests, the decorations on these vessels take their cue from the sea. The vessels are almost entirely covered with sea creatures such as dolphins, fish, and octopi, along with seaweed, rock, and sponges.

Unlike their Kamares ware predecessors, the light and dark color scheme is inverted: the figures are dark on a light background. Like the landscape frescoes at Thera, these paintings demonstrate a keen understanding and intimate knowledge of the marine environment.

In the Marine-style Octopus Vase from the city of Palaikastro, the octopus wraps around the jug, mimicking and accentuating its round shape. The octopus is painted in great detail, from each of its distinct stylized suckers to its bulbous head and the extension of its long tentacles. The surface of this vessel is covered by the main image; bits of seaweed fill the negative space .

This filling of the empty space with additional images or designs is another characteristic of Minoan Marine-style pottery. The style is known as horror vacui, which is Latin for fear of empty space. The same aesthetic is seen later, in Greek Geometric pottery.

Octopus vase: Octopus vase from Palaikastro, Crete, Greece. Circa 1500 BCE.

Minoan Sculpture

Minoan sculpture consists of figurines that reflect the culture's artistic style and important aspects of daily life.

Learning Objectives

Give examples of Minoan sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Most known Minoan sculptures are small scale. They range from single figures, often frontal, to figure groups that include both people and animals. The wide variety of materials used for these figurines represent the extent of the Minoan trade network throughout the Mediterranean.
- The Snake Goddess statue from Knossos represents an important female figure in Minoan culture . Due to her connection with snakes and felines, as well as her bare breasts, she is perhaps an earth goddess or a Minoan priestess.
- The Bull Leaper demonstrates the Minoan use of bronze in art as well as highlighting the importance of the bull in Minoan sculpture and artistic style .
- An ivory bull leaper from Knossos demonstrates another position the acrobat's body assumed during the act.
- The Palaikastro Kouros is a rare example of a large-scale Minoan sculpture. Its size and rare materials lead experts to believe that it was used as a cult image.

Key Terms

- **lost-wax casting**:The most common method of using molten metal to make hollow, one-of-a-kind sculptures. When heat is applied to the clay mold, the wax layer within melts and forms channels, which the artist then fills with molten metal.
- **faience**:A low-fired, opaque, quartz ceramic that creates a glass-like material in bright shades of blue, green, white, and brown that originates from Ancient Egypt.
- **chthonic**:Dwelling within or under the earth.
- **curvilinear**:Having bends; curved; formed by curved lines.

As with their painting, Minoan sculpture demonstrates stylistic conventions including curvilinear forms; active, energized scenes; and long-limbed humans with broad shoulders and narrow waists. Women are often depicted in large, long, layered skirts that accentuate their hips. So far, the majority of sculptures and figurines found during Minoan excavations have been small scale.

Minoan Woman, c. 1600-1500 BCE.: Bronze. Crete.

Materials

The small-scale sculptures of the Minoans were produced in many different materials including ivory, gold, faience , and bronze. The variety of materials acknowledges the extensive trade network established by the Minoans. For instance, faience, an quartz ceramic , is an Egyptian material. Its presence in sculpture found on Crete demonstrates that the material was shipped raw from Egypt to Crete, where it was then formed to create Minoan sculpture.

Bronze was an important material in Minoan culture and many figurines were produced in this medium , mostly created using the lost-wax casting technique.

Snake Goddess

One figurine, known as the Snake Goddess , depicts a woman with open arms who holds a snake in each hand, with a feline sitting on her head. The purpose or function of the statue is unknown, although it is believed that she may have been an earth goddess or priestess.

The snakes are considered chthonic animals—related to the earth and the ground—and are often symbols of earth deities . Furthermore, the Snake Goddess is dressed in a layered skirt with a tight bodice, covered shoulders, and exposed breasts. The prominence of her breasts may suggest that she is fertility figure. Although her function remains unknown, the figure's significance to the culture is unquestionable.

Snake Goddess, circa 1600 BCE.: Palace at Knossos, Knossos, Crete.

Other figures in similar poses and outfits have also been found among Minoan ruins.

Bull Leaper

The Bull Leaper bronze, depicting a bull and an acrobat, was created as a single group. The figures are similar in style and position, as seen in several bull-leaping frescoes , including one from the palatial complex at Knossos.

Bull Leaper, circa 1550–1450 BCE.: Bronze. Southwest Crete.

The bull stands frozen in a flying gallop, while a leaper appears to be flipping over his back. The acrobat's feet are planted firmly on the bull's rump, and the figure bends backwards with its arms planted on the bull's head, perhaps preparing to launch off of the bull. The two figures, bull and man, mirror each other, as the bull's back sways in the gallop and the man's back is arched in a deep back bend.

In another sculpture of a bull leaper (c. 1500 BCE), the acrobat is frozen in a forward-facing mid-somersault position. This ivory sculpture from Knossos is the only complete surviving figure from a larger arrangement and is the earliest three-dimensional representation of the bull leap. Experts believe that thin gold wires were used to suspend the figure over a bull.

Bull Leaper, circa 1500 BCE.: Sculpted from ivory. Knossos, Greece.

The figures are made with curvilinear lines and the positioning of both figures adds a high degree of movement and action that was commonly found in Minoan art.

Palaikastro Kouros

While most known Minoan sculpture is small scale, at least one sculpture serves as an exception to this rule. The so-called Palaikastro Kouros (not to be confused with the stylized male sculptures of ancient Greece), which dates to the Late Minoan period (late fifteenth century BCE), stands at almost 20 inches (50 cm) tall.

It is an example of a Chryselephantine sculpture: it consists of a wooden frame, with thin carved slabs of ivory attached to represent the flesh. Sheets of gold leaf likely represent details such as hair and clothing. Its head consists of a semiprecious green stone called serpentine with rock crystal eyes. Because of its scale and the rareness of its media, experts believe the sculpture was a cult image.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Map Minoan Crete-en. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Minoan_Crete-en.svg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Neopalatial Period. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/307859/textbooks/painting-1-8adf00aa-c11d-45a0-864a-1de2e11ad1f5/ancient-greece-aegean-civilizations-2/the-minoans-35/the-neopalatial-period-256-10991/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/The Minoans. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/The_Minoans. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan chronology. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_chronology. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient History/Greece/Minoan Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Ancient_History/Greece/Minoan_Civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arthur Evans. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Evans. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_civilization%23Minoans_beyond_Crete. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- minotaur. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/minotaur. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- labyrinth. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/labyrinth. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Linear A. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Linear_A. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cnossos-planol. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cnossos-planol.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Knossos inside. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Knossos_inside.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Festos1(js).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16071061. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Knossos_-_North_Portico_02.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20916502. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Labyrinth in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/labyrinth/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_civilization%23Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Knossos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Knossos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Phaistos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Phaistos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pithoi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/pithoi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- AMI - Kamaresvase 2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AMI_-_Kamaresvase_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- NAMA Akrotiri 4. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NAMA_Akrotiri_4.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bull-leaping. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bull-leaping.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- AMI - Oktopusvase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AMI_-_Oktopusvase.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Knossos_fresco_women.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1350752. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-AKROTIRI_SHIP-PROCESSION-FULL_PANO.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1567513%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Wall Paintings of Thera. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wall_Paintings_of_Thera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thera. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thera%23Minoan_Akrotiri. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Knossos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Knossos%23Frescoes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Throne Room, Knossos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne_Room,_Knossos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kamares Ware. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamares_Ware. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thera eruption. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thera_eruption%23Minoan_civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bull-Leaping Fresco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bull-Leaping_Fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Horror Vacui in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/horror-vacui. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Buon Fresco in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/buon-fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Snake Goddess Crete 1600BC. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Snake_Goddess_Crete_1600BC.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan Bull-leaper. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minoan_Bull-leaper.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 601px-The_Bull_Leaper_Knossos_1500BC.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=190666. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan girl, c. 1600-1500 BCE, bronze, Crete, Cleveland Museum of Art. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minoan_girl,_c._1600-1500_BCE,_bronze,_Crete,_Cleveland_Museum_of_Art.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Casting. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/284900/textbooks/art-100-02/sculpture-11/methods-of-sculpture-56/casting-284-13046/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bull-Leaping. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bull-leaping. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palaikastro Kouros. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palaikastro_Kouros. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chryselephantine Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chryselephantine_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- faience. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/faience. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient History/Greece/Minoan Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Ancient_History/Greece/Minoan_Civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/The Minoans. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/The_Minoans. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_civilization%23Minoans_beyond_Crete. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minoan chronology. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_chronology. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arthur Evans. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Evans%23Discovery_of_Minoan_civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- curvilinear. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/curvilinear. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chthonic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chthonic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 5.2: Minoan Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

5.3: Mycenaean Art

Mycenaean Architecture

The architecture of Mycenaean citadel sites reflects the society's war-like culture and its constant need for protection and fortification.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Mycenaean architecture, such as their use of Cyclopean masonry and the corbel arch

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The city of Mycenae was the center of Mycenaean culture . It is especially known for its protective gateway, the Lion Gate, and the Treasury of Atreus, an example of a tholos tomb. Mycenaean architecture reflects their warring society. A wide, strong wall built from large, roughly cut stones (known as cyclopean masonry) was one method of protection, as was limited access to citadel sites and well-protected gates.
- Since a lintel over a doorway could not support the wall above it without collapsing, the Mycenaeans used corbeled vaults and a relieving triangle over lintels to redistribute the weight off the horizontal beam and into the supporting walls.
- The central feature of a Mycenaean citadel site was the megaron , a room that functioned as the king's audience chamber. The megaron is entered through a porch with two columns and the main room included four columns around a central hearth.
- Uniformity among the citadel sites throughout the Mycenaean civilization allow us to easily compare components such as megarons.

Key Terms

- **post-and-lintel**: A simple construction method using a header as the horizontal member over a building void supported at its ends by two vertical columns.
- **corbel**: A structural member jutting out of a wall to carry a superincumbent weight.
- **ashlar**: Masonry made of large, square-cut stones.
- **megaron**: The rectangular great hall in a Mycenaean building, usually supported with pillars.
- **cyclopean masonry**: A type of stonework found in Mycenaean architecture, built with massive limestone boulders that are roughly fitted together with minimal clearance between adjacent stones and no use of mortar.
- **citadel**: The core fortified area of a town or city.

Mycenaean Architecture

Mycenaean culture can be summarized by its architecture, whose remains demonstrate the Mycenaeans' war-like culture and the dominance of citadel sites ruled by a single ruler. The Mycenaeans populated Greece and built citadels on high, rocky outcroppings that provided natural fortification and overlooked the plains used for farming and raising livestock. The citadels vary from city to city but each share common attributes, including building techniques and architectural features.

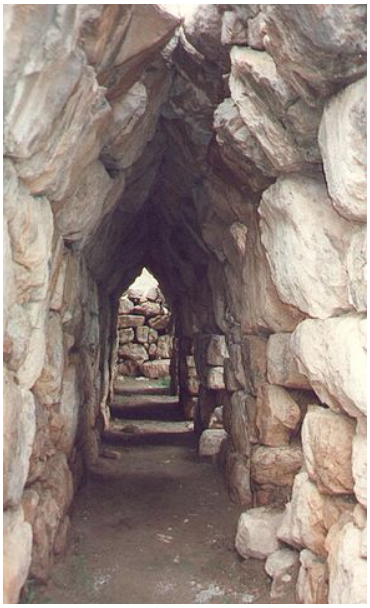
Building Techniques

The walls of Mycenaean citadel sites were often built with ashlar and massive stone blocks. The blocks were considered too large to be moved by humans and were believed by ancient Greeks to have been erected by the Cyclopes—one-eyed giants. Due to this ancient belief, the use of large, roughly cut, ashlar blocks in building is referred to as Cyclopean masonry. The thick Cyclopean walls reflect a need for protection and self-defense since these walls often encircled the citadel site and the acropolis on which the site was located.

Corbel Arch

The Mycenaeans also relied on new techniques of building to create supportive archways and vaults. A typical post and lintel structure is not strong enough to support the heavy structures built above it. Therefore, a corbeled (or corbel) arch is employed over doorways to relieve the weight on the lintel.

The corbel arch is constructed by offsetting successive courses of stone (or brick) at the springline of the walls so that they project towards the archway's center from each supporting side, until the courses meet at the apex of the archway (often, the last gap is bridged with a flat stone). The corbel arch was often used by the Mycenaeans in conjunction with a relieving triangle, which was a triangular block of stone that fit into the recess of the corbeled arch and helped to redistribute weight from the lintel to the supporting walls.



Corbeled vault, Tiryns: This photo shows the offsetting successive courses of stone at the springline of the walls so that they project towards the archway's center from each supporting side, until the courses meet at the apex of the archway.

Citadel Sites

Mycenaean citadel sites were centered around the megaron, a reception area for the king. The megaron was a rectangular hall, fronted by an open, two-columned porch. It contained a more or less central open hearth, which was vented though an oculus in the roof above it and surrounded by four columns. The architectural plan of the megaron became the basic shape of Greek temples, demonstrating the cultural shift as the gods of ancient Greece took the place of the Mycenaean rulers.

Citadel sites were protected from invasion through natural and man-made fortification. In addition to thick walls, the sites were protected by controlled access. Entrance to the site was through one or two large gates, and the pathway into the main part of the citadel was often controlled by more gates or narrow passageways. Since citadels had to protect the area's people in times of warfare, the sites were equipped for sieges. Deep water wells, storage rooms, and open space for livestock and additional citizens allowed a city to access basic needs while being protected during times of war.

Mycenae

The citadel site of Mycenae was the center of Mycenaean culture. It overlooks the Argos plain on the Peloponnesian peninsula, and according to Greek mythology was the home to King Agamemnon.

The site's megaron sits on the highest part of the acropolis and is reached through a large staircase. Inside the walls are various rooms for administration and storage along with palace quarters, living spaces, and temples. A large grave site, known as Grave Circle A, is also built within the walls.

The main approach to the citadel is through the Lion Gate, a cyclopean-walled entrance way. The gate is 20 feet wide, which is large enough for citizens and wagons to pass through, but its size and the walls on either side create a tunneling effect that makes it difficult for an invading army to penetrate.

The gate is famous for its use of the relieving arch, a corbeled arch that leaves an opening and lightens the weight carried by the lintel. The Lion Gate received its name from its decorated relieving triangle of lions one either side of a single column. This composition of lions or another feline animal flanking a single object is known as a heraldic composition. The lions represent cultural influences from the Ancient Near East. Their heads are turned to face outwards and confront those who enter the gate.

Lion Gate, limestone, circa 1300–1250 BCE, Mycenae, Greece: The Lion Gate is famous for its use of the relieving arch, a corbeled arch that leaves an opening and lightens the weight carried by the lintel.

Mycenae is also home to a subterranean beehive-shaped tomb (also known as a tholos tomb) that was located outside the citadel walls. The tomb is known today as the Treasury of Atreus, due to the wealth of grave goods found there.

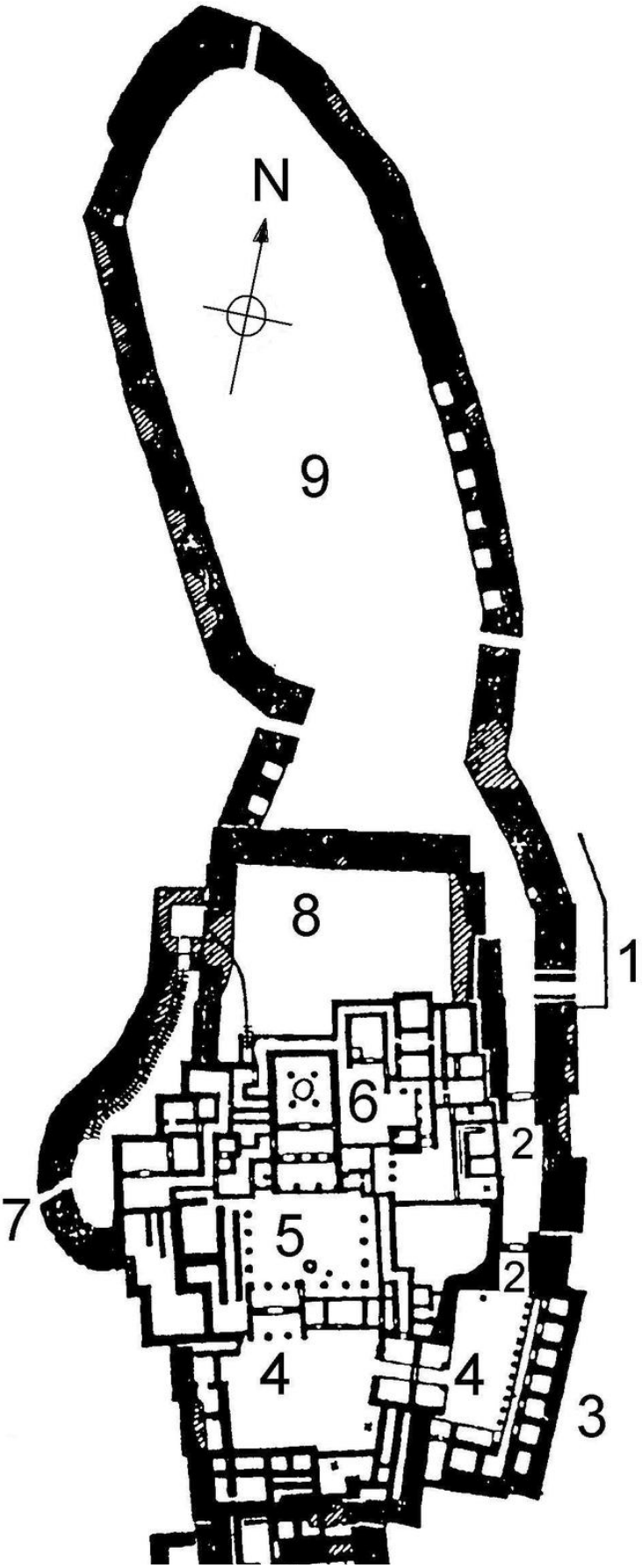
This tomb and others like it are demonstrations of corbeled vaulting that covers an expansive open space. The vault is 44 feet high and 48 feet in diameter. The tombs are entered through a narrow passageway known as a dromos and a post-and-lintel doorway topped by a relieving triangle.

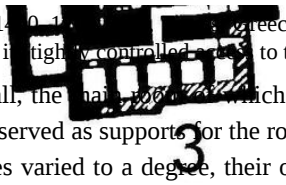
Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae, Greece, circa 1300–1250 BCE.: The Treasury of Atreus and others tombs like it are demonstrations of corbeled vaulting that covers an expansive open space.

Tiyrns

The citadel site of Tiryns, another example of Mycenaean fortification, was a hill fort that has been occupied over the course of 7000 years. It reached its height between 1400 and 1200 BCE, when it was one of the most important centers of the Mycenaean world. Its most notable features were its palace, its Cyclopean tunnels, its walls, and its tightly controlled access to the megaron and main rooms of the citadel.

Just a few gates provide access to the hill but only one path leads to the main site. This path is narrow and protected by a series of gates that could be opened and closed to trap invaders. The central megaron is easy to locate, and it is surrounded by various palatial and administrative rooms. The megaron is accessed through a courtyard that is decorated on three sides with a colonnade .


N
9
8
1
6
2
7
5
2
4
4
3



Ground plan of the citadel of Tiryns, circa 1[illegible] Greece: The citadel site of Tiryns is known for its Cyclopean vaulted tunnels that run next to its walls and i[illegible] to the megaron and the main rooms of the citadel.

The famous megaron has a large reception hall, the [illegible] which had a throne placed against the right wall and a central hearth bordered by four wooden columns that served as supports for the roof. It was laid out around a circular hearth surrounded by four columns. Although individual citadel sites varied to a degree, their overall uniformity allows us to compare design elements easily. For example, the hearth of the megaron at the citadel of Pylos provides an idea of how its counterpart at Tiryns appears.

Megaron hearth at the citadel of Pylos: Due to the uniformity of citadel plans throughout the Mycenaean civilization, we can get an idea of how the hearth of the megaron at Tiryns looked by comparing it to its counterpart at Pylos. The holes at the corners of the surrounding square once held wooden columns.

Mycenaean Metallurgy

The Mycenaeans were masterful metalworkers, as their gold, silver, and bronze daggers, drinking cups, and other objects demonstrate.

Learning Objectives

List the items found in Mycenaean burial sites that demonstrate the Mycenaeans' skill in metallurgy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Grave Circle A and B, at Mycenae, are a series of shaft graves enclosed by a wall from the 16th century BCE. These grave sites were originally excavated by Heinrich Schleimann, and the grave goods found there demonstrate the incredible skill Mycenaeans possessed in metalwork.
- Gold death masks were commonly placed over the face of the wealthy deceased. These death masks record the main features of the dead and are made with repoussé , a metalworking technique. When compared to other masks, the Death Mask of Agamemnon is most likely a fake.
- Bronze daggers inlaid with gold, silver, and niello are a common grave good found at Mycenaean burial sites. These daggers represent international trade and cultural connections between the Mycenaeans and the Minoans, Egyptians, and Near Eastern cultures .
- Rhytons were also crafted out of gold and silver. Some, such as the Silver Siege Rhyton, were used for ritual libations .
- Other objects of gold, silver, and bronze have been excavated from Mycenaean grave sites and cities, including armor, jewelry, signet rings, and seals.

Key Terms

- **diadem**: A crown or headband worn as a symbol of sovereignty.

- **repoussé**: A metalworking technique in which a thin sheet of malleable metal is shaped by hammering from the reverse side to create a design in low relief.
- **rhyton**: A container, having a base in the form of a head, from which fluids are intended to be drunk.
- **niello**: Any of various black metal alloys, made of sulphur with copper, silver or lead, used to create decorative designs on other metals.

Grave Circle A at Mycenae

Grave Circle A is a set of graves from the sixteenth century BCE located at Mycenae. The grave circle was originally located outside the walls of the city but was later encompassed inside the walls of the citadel when the city's walls were enlarged during the thirteenth century BCE.

The grave circle is surrounded by a second wall and only has one entrance. Inside are six tombs for nineteen bodies that were buried inside shaft graves. The shaft graves were deep, narrow shafts dug into the ground .

The body would be placed inside a stone coffin and placed at the bottom of the grave along with grave goods. The graves were often marked by a mound of earth above them and grave stele .

The grave site was excavated by Heinrich Schleimann in 1876, who excavated ancient sites such as Mycenae and Troy based on the writings of Homer and was determined to find archaeological remains that aligned with observations discussed in the Iliad and the Odyssey. The archaeological methods of the nineteenth century were different than those of the twenty-first century and Schleimann's desire to discover remains that aligned with mythologies and Homeric stories did not seem as unusual as it does today. Upon excavating the tombs, Schleimann declared that he found the remains of Agamemnon and many of his followers.

Grave Circle B

An additional grave circle, Grave Circle B, is also located at Mycenae, although this one was never incorporated into the citadel site. The two grave circles were elite burial grounds for the ruling dynasty . The graves were filled with precious items made from expensive material, including gold, silver, and bronze.

The amount of gold, silver, and previous materials in these tombs not only depict the wealth of the ruling class of the Mycenae but also demonstrates the talent and artistry of Mycenaean metalworking. Reoccurring themes and motifs underline the culture's propensity for war and the cross-cultural connections that the Mycenaeans established with other Mediterranean cultures through trade, including the Minoans, Egyptians, and even the Orientalizing style of the Ancient Near East

Gold Death Masks

*Repous*sé death masks were found in many of the tombs. The death masks were created from thin sheets of gold, through a careful method of metalworking to create a low relief .

These objects are fragile, carefully crafted, and laid over the face of the dead. Schleimann called the most famous of the death masks the Mask of Agamemnon, under the assumption that this was the burial site of the Homeric king. The mask depicts a man with a triangular face, bushy eyebrows, a narrow nose, pursed lips, a mustache, and stylized ears.

This mask is an impressive and beautiful specimen but looks quite different from other death masks found at the site. The faces on other death masks are rounder; the eyes are more bulbous; and at least one bears a hint of a smile. None of the other figures have a mustache or even the hint of beard.

In fact, the mustache looks distinctly nineteenth century and is comparable to the mustache that Schleimann himself had. The artistic quality between the Mask of Agamemnon and the others seems dramatically different. Despite these differences, the Mask of Agamemnon has inserted itself into the story of Mycenaean art.

Mycenaean death mask: Mycenaean death mask with a hint of a smile. Gold, circa 1600–1500 BCE. It was found in Grave Circle A, Grave Shaft IV, at Mycenae, Greece.

Mask of Agamemnon: The Mask of Agamemnon, identified by Heinrich Schliemann. Gold, circa 1600–1500 BCE (?). It was found in Grave Circle A, Grave shaft V, at Mycenae, Greece.

Bronze Daggers

Decorative bronze daggers found in the grave shafts suggest there were multicultural influences on Mycenaean artists. These ceremonial daggers were made of bronze and inlaid in silver, gold, and niello with scenes that were clearly influenced from foreign cultures.

Two daggers that were excavated depict scenes of hunts, which suggest an Ancient Near East influence. One of these scenes depicts lions hunting prey, while the other scene depicts a lion hunt. The portrayal of the figures in the lion hunt scene draws distinctly from the style of figures found in Minoan painting. These figures have narrow waists, broad shoulders, and large, muscular thighs.

The scene between the hunters and the lions is dramatic and full of energy, another Minoan influence. Another dagger depicts the influence of Minoan painting and imagery through the depiction of marine life, and Egyptian influences are seen on a dagger filled with lotus and papyrus reeds along with fowl.

Mycenaean hunting dagger: A mycenaean hunting dagger with a scene of a lion hunt. Bronze with gold, silver, and niello inlay. Circa 16th century BCE. It was found in Grave Circle A, at Mycenae, Greece.

Gold and Silver Drinking Cups

A variety of gold and silver drinking cups have also been found in these grave shafts. These include a rhyton in the shape of a bull's head, with golden horns and a decorative, stylized gold flower, made from silver repoussé. Other cups include the golden Cup of Nestor, a large two handle cup that Schleimann attributed to the legendary Mycenaean hero Nestor, a Trojan War veteran who plays a peripheral role in The Odyssey.

The Cup of Nestor: The Cup of Nestor. Gold, circa 1600–1500 BCE. It was found in Grave Circle A, Grave Shaft IV, at Mycenae, Greece.

A silver rhyton called the Silver Siege Rhyton was likely used for ritual libations. The Silver Siege Rhyton is unique for its depiction of a siege. The scene is only preserved on a portion of the rhyton, but a landscape of trees and a fortress wall are clearly recognizable. The figures in the scene appear to be in various positions, some men fight each other. An archer crouches with his bow and arrow, while others throw rocks down from the wall at the invaders.

A third rhyton in the form of a bull's head suggests a similarity with the Minoan culture, like the dagger mentioned earlier. The rhyton consists primarily of silver with gold-leaf accents. Its purpose as a ceremonial vessel arguably places the bull in a role of significance in the Mycenaean culture.

Rhyton in the form of a bull's head: Mycenaean. Circa 1600–1500 BCE. Found in Grave Circle A.

Other Objects

Additional gold trinkets include signet rings that depict images of hunts, combat, and animals, along with other decorative jewelry, such as bracelets, earrings, pendants, and diadems (headbands designating their wearers' sovereign status).

Bronze armor, including breastplates and helmets, were also uncovered in excavations of the tomb sites.

Gold diadems: Circa 1600–1500 BCE. Found in Grave Circle A.

Mycenaean Ceramics

The Mycenaeans were talented potters whose ceramic styles and decorations reflect their skill and the values of their culture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the figurines, rhytons, kraters, and other ceramic objects made by the Mycenaeans

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mycenaean pottery can be identified by the types of clay and painting the artists used to create and decorate their vessels . Different pottery centers preferred different clay, slips , and motifs . Popular themes include nature, marine life, narratives, and abstract design.
- The Warriors Vase depicts a static scene of a woman bidding farewell to armed warriors. The vase, from Mycenae, is decorated with minimal color and a uniform design. This vase represents the culture ‘s dependence on warfare.
- Mycenaean rhytons crafted from terra cotta were usually conically shaped and painted to represent different animals, such as a boar or a bull; they also had other details added to them.
- Small-scale Mycenaean figurines made from terra cotta are abstract simple figures, often of women, that are simply painted and detailed. The figures have bodies that are rounded or stand with outstretched arms, their legs are represented by cylindrical bases.

Key Terms

- **rhyton**: A container, having a base in the form of a head, from which fluids are drunk.
- **krater**: An ancient Greek vessel for mixing water and wine.
- **figurine**: A small carved or molded figure; a statuette.

Mycenaean Ceramics

The Mycenaeans created numerous ceramic vessels of various types and decorated them in a variety of styles . These vessels were popular outside of Greece, and were often exported and traded around the Mediterranean and have been found in Egypt, Italy, Asia Minor, and Spain.

Two of the main production centers were the Mycenaean cities at Athens and Corinth. The products of the two centers were distinguishable by their color and decoration. Corinthian clay was a pale yellow and tended to feature painted scenes based on nature, while the Athenian potters decorated their vessels with a rich red and preferred geometric designs.

Vessels

The most popular types of vessels included kraters —large, open-mouth jars to mix wine and water—pitchers, and stirrup jars, which are so named for the handles that came above the top of the vessel. Mycenaean vessels usually had a pale, off-white background and were painted in a single color, either red, brown, or black.

Popular motifs include abstract geometric designs, animals, marine life, or narrative scenes. The presence of nature scenes, especially of marine life and of bulls, seems to suggest a Minoan influence on the style and motifs painted on the Mycenaean pots.

Vessels served the purposes of storage, processing, and transfer. There are a few different classes of pottery, generally separated into two main sections: utilitarian and elite.

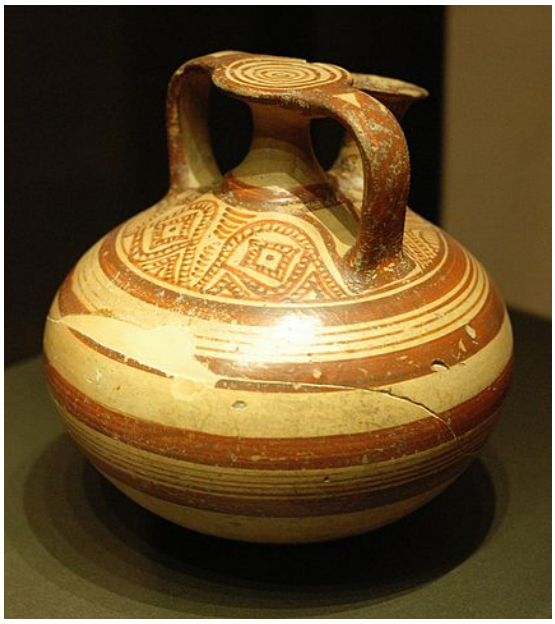
1. Utilitarian pottery is sometimes decorated, made for functional domestic use, and constitutes the bulk of the pottery made.
2. Elite pottery is finely made and elaborately decorated with great regard for detail. This form of pottery is generally made for holding precious liquids and for decoration.

Stirrup Jars

Stirrup jars, mainly used for storing liquids such as oil and wine, could have been economically valuable in Mycenaean households. The arrangement of common features suggests that a stopper is used to secure the contents and the contents are what make the jar a valuable household item.

The disc holes and third handle may have been used to secure a tag to the vessel, suggesting it had commercial importance and resale value . The locations where stirrup jars have been found reflect the fact that the popularity of this vessel type spread quickly

throughout the Aegean, and the use of the stirrup jar to identify a specific commodity became important.



Mycenaean stirrup jar : Terra cotta. c. 1350 BCE.

Warrior Vase

The Warrior Vase (c. 12oo BCE) is a bell krater that depicts a woman bidding farewell to a group of warriors. The scene is simple and lacks a background.

The men all carry round shields and spears and wear helmets. Attached to their spears are knapsacks, which suggest that they must travel long distances to battle. On one side, the soldiers wear helmets ornamented with horns. The soldiers on the other side wear hedgehog-style helmets. A single woman stands to the left with her arm raised and a group of identically dressed and heavily armed men is marching off to the right.

There is no way to tell which woman is waving goodbye, as all the figures are generic and none specifically interacts with her, nor do they interact with each other. The figures are stocky and lack the sinuous lines of the painted Minoan figures.

Furthermore, while the men all face right with wide stances and appear to move in that direction, their flat feet and twisted perspective bodies inhibit any potential for movement. Instead the figures remain static and upright. The imagery depicts a simple narrative that in the warrior culture of the Mycenaeans must have often been reenacted.

Warrior Vase: Warrior Vase. Terra cotta. c. 1200 BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

Many scholars observe that the style of the figures and the handles of this thirteenth century BCE vase are very similar to eighth century BCE pottery. Similar spearmen are also depicted in eighth century BCE pottery which introduces a curious 500 year gap in styles.

Figurines

Small terra cotta figurines and statuettes are found throughout Mycenaean grave sites and cities. The purpose of these figures is unknown, although they may carry a votive or cult association. Some figurines found in children's tombs may be toys.

The most common style depicts female figures and are from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. The figures are small and are divided into two categories:

1. Those that look like the Greek letter phi (phi-types), with a rounded upper body shape.
2. Those that look like the Greek letter psi (psi-types), which have outstretched arms.

Both figures have heads that are narrow and pinched into a triangle. Details such as the eyes, mouth, and nose are painted on. The bases of the figures are cylindrical and their legs seem to be painted as a visual afterthought. These figures are painted simply with stripes and zigzags, often on the upper body, and details such as eyes are also added in with paint, while breasts are portrayed with clay protrusions.

Phi figures: Mycenaean phi figures. Terra cotta, c. 13th century. BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

Psi figure: Mycenaean psi figure. Terracotta, c. 1280 BCE. Tiryns, Greece.

There are few examples of large-scale, freestanding sculptures from the Mycenaeans. A painted plaster head of a female—perhaps depicting a priestess, goddess, or sphinx —is one of the few examples of large-scale sculpture.

The head is painted white, suggesting that it depicts a female. A red band wraps around her head with bits of hair underneath. The eyes and eyebrows are outlined in blue, the lips are red, and red circles surrounded by small red dots are on her checks and chin.

Female head: Female head of a priestess, goddess, or sphinx. Painted plaster. c. 1300-1250 BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

Rhytons

Rhytons are elaborate, decorative drinking cups that often take the shape of animals. They are usually made of precious materials, such as gold or silver, but they may also be made of terra cotta.

Several Mycenaean rhytons have been excavated, and include one in the shape of a boar's head and another in the shape of a bull's head. The bull-headed rhyton may have been influenced by or intended for trade with the Minoans. Both of these rhytons are conically shaped, painted in a single color with abstract shapes, and have defining features, such as ears and eyes.

Bull-headed rhyton: Bull-headed rhyton. Terra cotta, circa 1300–1200 BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Lions-Gate-Mycenae. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lions-Gate-Mycenae.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Treasury of Atreus Mycenae. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treasury_of_Atreus_Mycenae.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- BurchtTiryns2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BurchtTiryns2.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Pilo001.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30186132. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 292px-Tiryns.Castle.02.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=183373. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashlar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashlar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tiryns. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiryns. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Citadel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Citadel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Post-and-Lintel in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/post-and-lintel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenae. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenae. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Corbelled vault. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Corbelled_vault%23Ancient_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Megaron. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Megaron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cyclopean masonry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclopean_masonry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Beehive tomb. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Beehive_tomb. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Lion Gate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion_Gate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenaean Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenaean_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- megaron. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/megaron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- corbel. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/corbel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Cyclopean Masonry in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/cyclopean-masonry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenae4. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mycenae4.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 360px-Exhibit_Archaeologycal_Museum_Athens.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2614730. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Gold_in_NAMA_02.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4269002. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Nestorbecher Mykene (Nationalmuseum Athen). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nestorbecher_Mykene_(Nationalmuseum_Athen).JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MaskOfAgamemnon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MaskOfAgamemnon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hunting Mycenaean Dagger. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hunting_Mycenaean_Dagger.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenaean Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenaean_Greece%23Funerary_practices. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nestor's Cup. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestor's_Cup. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grave Circle A, Mycenae. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Grave_Circle_A,_Mycenae. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Silver Siege Rhyton. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Siege_Rhyton. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Niello. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/niello. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Repoussu00e9. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/repousse. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rhyton. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rhyton. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenaean psi figure. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/9/9e/Psi-figurine_Tiryns_Louvre_CA589.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- NAMA Mycenes portrait feminin. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NAMA_Mycenes_portrait_feminin.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek pottery in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens 14. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Greek_pottery_in_the_National_Archaeological_Museum_in_Athens_14.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 430px-Stirrup_vase_Louvre_MNC321.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=484734. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Phi figurines Louvre MNE 1007. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phi_figurines_Louvre_MNE_1007.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bull-rhyton BM A971. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bull-rhyton_BM_A971.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenaean Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenaean_Greece%23Vessels. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stirrup jar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stirrup_jar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Warrior Vase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrior_Vase. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mycenaean pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenaean_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- figurine. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/figurine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- krater. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/krater. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- rhyton. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rhyton. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 5.3: Mycenaean Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Ancient Greece

6.1: Introduction to Ancient Greece
6.2: The Geometric Period
6.3: The Orientalizing Period
6.4: The Archaic Period
6.5: The Early Classical Period
6.6: The High Classical Period
6.7: The Hellenistic Period

This page titled 6: Ancient Greece is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.1: Introduction to Ancient Greece

Introduction to Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek culture spans over a thousand years, from the earliest civilizations to the cultures that became the Ancient Greeks.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate a timeline of ancient Greece from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ancient Greek culture is noted for its government, art, architecture, philosophy, and sports, all of which became foundations for modern western society. It was admired and adopted by others, including Alexander the Great and the Romans, who helped spread Greek culture around the world. Before Greek culture took root in Greece, early civilizations thrived on the Greek mainland and the Aegean Islands. The fall of these cultures and the aftermath, known as the Dark Age, is believed to be the time when the Homeric epics were first recited.
- Greek culture began to develop during the Geometric, Orientalizing, and Archaic periods, which lasted from 900 to 480 BCE. During this time the population of city-states began to grow, Panhellenic traditions were established, and art and architecture began to reflect Greek values .
- The Early, High, and Late Classical periods in Greece occurred from 480 to 323 BCE. During these periods, Greece flourished and the polis of Athens saw its Golden Age under the leadership of Pericles . However, city-state rivalries lead to wars, and Greece was never truly stable until conquered.
- The Hellenistic period in Greece is the last period before Greek culture becomes a subset of Roman hegemony . This period occurs from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, to the Greek defeat at the Battle of Actium in 30 BCE. It marks the spread of Greek culture across the Mediterranean.

Key Terms

- **polis**: A city, or a city-state. Its plural is poleis.

Ancient Greek Culture

Ancient Greek culture covers over a thousand years of history, from the earliest civilizations in the area to the cultures that became the Ancient Greeks. Following a Greek Dark Age, Greece once more flourished and developed into the ancient culture that we recognize today .

Classical Greece: Map of Ancient Greece.

Greek culture is based on a series of shared values that connected independent city-states throughout the region, and expanded as far north as Mount Olympus. Greek society was insular, and loyalties were focused around one's polis (city-state). Greeks considered themselves civilized and considered outsiders to be barbaric.

While Greek daily life and loyalty was centered on one's polis, the Greeks did create leagues, which vied for control of the peninsula, and were able to unite together against a common threat (such as the Persians).

Greek culture is focused on their government, art, architecture, philosophy, and sport. Athens was intensely proud of its creation of democracy, and citizens from all poleis (city-states) took part in civic duties. Cities commissioned artists and architects to honor their gods and beautify their cities.

Greek philosophers, mathematicians, and thinkers are still honored in society today. As a religious people, the Greeks worshipped a number of gods through sacrifices, rituals, and festivals.

Bronze Age and Proto-Greek Civilizations

Cycladic Civilization

During the Bronze Age, several distinct cultures developed around the Aegean. The Cycladic civilization, around the Cyclades Islands, thrived from 3,000 to 2,000 BCE. Little is known about the Cycladic civilization because they left no written records. Their material culture is mainly excavated from grave sites, which reveal that the people produced unique, geometric marble figures.

Minoan Civilization

The Minoan civilization stretches from 3700 BCE until 1200 BCE, and thrived during their Neopalatial period (from 1700 to 1400 BCE), with the large-scale building of communal palaces. Numerous archives have been discovered at Minoan sites; however their language, Linear A , has yet to be deciphered. The culture was centered on trade and production, and the Minoans were great seafarers on the Mediterranean Sea.

Mycenaean Civilization

A proto-Greek culture known as the Mycenaeans developed and flourished on the mainland, eventually conquering the Aegean Islands and Crete, where the Minoan civilization was centered. The Mycenaeans developed a fractious, war-like culture that was centered on the authority of a single ruler. Their culture eventually collapsed, but many of their citadel sites were occupied through the Greek Dark Age and rebuilt into Greek city-states.

The Dark Age

From around 1200 BCE, the palace centers and outlying settlements of the Mycenaeans' culture began to be abandoned or destroyed. By 1050 BCE, the recognizable features of Mycenaean culture had disappeared.

Many explanations attribute the fall of the Mycenaean civilization and the collapse of the Bronze Age to climatic or environmental catastrophe, combined with an invasion by the Dorians or by the Sea Peoples, or to the widespread availability of edged weapons of iron, but no single explanation fits the available archaeological evidence.

This two- to three-century span of history is also known as the Homeric Age. It is believed that the Homeric epics The Iliad and The Odyssey were first recited around this time.

The Geometric and Orientalizing Periods

The Geometric period (c. 900–700 BCE), which derives its name from the proliferation of geometric designs and rendering of figures in art, witnessed the emergence of a new culture on the Greek mainland. The culture's change in language, its adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet, and its new funerary practices and material culture suggest the ethnic population changed from the mainland's previous inhabitants, the Mycenaeans.

During this time, the new culture was centered on the people and independent poleis, which divided the land into regional populations. This period witnessed a growth in population and the revival of trade.

The Orientalizing period (c. 700–600 BCE) is named for the cultural exchanges the Greeks had with Eastern, or Oriental civilizations. During this time, international trade began to flourish. Art from this period reflects contact with locations such as

Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Phoenicia, and Israel.

Archaic Greece

Greece's Archaic period lasted from 600 to 480 BCE, in which the Greek culture expanded. The population in Greece began to rise and the Greeks began to colonize along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The poleis at this time were typically ruled by a single ruler who commanded the city by force.

For the city of Athens, this led to the creation of democracy. Several city-states emerged as major powers, including Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes. These poleis were often warring with each other, and formed coalitions to gain power and allies. The Persian invasion of Greece in 480 BCE marked the end of the Archaic period.

Classical Greece

The era of Classical Greece began in 480 BCE with the sacking of Athens by the Persians. The Persian invasion of Greece, first lead by Darius I and then by his son Xerxes, united Greece against a common enemy.

With the defeat of the Persian threat, Athens became the most powerful polis until the start of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BCE. These wars continued on and off until 400 BCE. While marred by war, the Classical period saw the height of Greek culture and the creation of some of Greece's most famous art and architecture.

However, peace and stability in Greece was not achieved until it was conquered and united by Macedonia under the leadership of Philip II and Alexander the Great in the mid-third century BCE.

Hellenistic Greece

The Hellenistic period began with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, and ended with the Roman victory at the Battle of Actium in 30 BCE. Greece poleis spent this time under the hegemony of foreign rulers, first the Macedons and then the Romans, starting in 146 BCE.

New centers of Hellenic culture flourished through Greece and on foreign soil, including the cities of Pergamon, Antioch, and Alexandria—the capitals of the Attalids, Seleucids, and Ptolemies.

The Ancient Greek Gods and Their Temples

Greek religion played a central and daily role in the life of ancient Greeks, and group worship was centered on the temple and cult sites.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ways in which Greek life and art was influenced by the gods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The history of the Greek pantheon begins with the primordial deities Gaia and Uranus and their children, the Titans. The pantheon of Greek gods consisted of twelve Olympian gods plus a variety of additional principal and minor gods and goddesses. The gods had human characteristics and personalities, and their lives were detailed by the mythologies told about them.
- The gods played a central role in Greek daily life. They were consulted, blamed, and honored for a variety of reasons, including natural occurrences (from earthquakes to rain), as well as for the public and private affairs of the polis and its people.
- The mythologies and cult worship of heroes also played an important role in Greek religion and ritual . Heroes—especially Perseus, Hercules , Theseus, and those involved in the Trojan War—were often depicted in art, and the location of their feats became cult sites.

- The temple was considered the home of the god and was often an expensive and lavishly decorated building. The temple included a naos , the main room that held the cult statue. Offerings and dedications were left for the gods, and sacrifices took place outdoors.

Key Terms

- **primordial**: Existing at or before the beginning of time.
- **demigod**: A half-god or hero; the offspring of a deity and a mortal.
- **libation**: The act of pouring a liquid or liquor, usually wine, either on the ground or on a victim in sacrifice, in honor of some deity.
- **naos**: The central room in the god's temple, where a cult statue of the god is erected.
- **polytheistic**: A religious system whose members worship many deities.
- **votive**: A small religious offering deposited at a temple without the purpose of display or retrieval.

Greek religious traditions encompassed a large pantheon of gods, complex mythologies, rituals, and cult practices. Greece was a polytheistic society, and looked to its gods and mythology to explain natural mysteries as well as current events. Religious festivals and ceremonies were held throughout the year, and animal sacrifice and votive offerings were popular ways to appease and worship the gods. Religious life, rituals, and practices were one of the unifying aspects of Greece across regions and poleis (cities, or city-states , such as Athens and Sparta).

The principal religious sanctuaries of the Greek Aegean: This map lists the major Greek gods and shows where their principal religious sanctuaries are located throughout the Greek Aegean region.

Greek Gods

Greek gods were immortal beings who possessed human-like qualities and were represented as completely human in visual art. They were moral and immoral, petty and just, and often vain. The gods were invoked to intervene and assist in matters large, small, private and public.

City-states claimed individual gods and goddess as their patrons . Temples and sanctuaries to the gods were built in every city. Many cities became cult sites due to their connection with a god or goddess and specific myths. For instance, the city of Delphi was known for its oracle and sanctuary of Apollo, because Apollo was believed to have killed a dragon that inhabited Delphi.

The history of the Greek pantheon begins with the primordial deities Gaia (Mother Earth) and Uranus (Father Sky), who were the parents of the first of twelve giants known as Titans. Among these Titans were six males and six females.

- The males were named Oceanus, Hyperion, Coeus, Crius, Iapetus, and Kronos.
- The females were named Themis, Mnemosyne, Tethys, Theia, Phoebe, and Rhea.

Kronos eventually overthrew Uranus and ruled during a mythological Golden Age. Over time, he and Rhea had twelve children who would become the Olympian gods. However, Kronos heard a prophecy that his son would overthrow him, as he did to Uranus. In an effort to avert fate, he ordered Rhea to allow him to devour each of the children upon their birth.

Themis: One of the first 12 Titans, Themis was the personification of divine law, as opposed to human ordinance.

The Olympian Gods

Best known among the pantheon are the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses who resided on Mt. Olympus in northern Greece. Zeus, the youngest son of Rhea and Kronos, was hidden from his father, instead of being swallowed. Once he became a man, he challenged his father's rule, forcing Kronos to regurgitate the rest of his swallowed children. These children were Zeus's siblings, and together they overthrew Kronos, making Zeus the father of gods and men.

Violence and power struggles were common in Greek mythology, and the Greeks used their mythologies to explain their lives around them, from the change in seasons to why the Persians were able to sack Athens.

The traditional pantheon of Greek gods includes

- Zeus, the king of gods and the ruler of the sky,
- Zeus' two brothers, Poseidon (who ruled over the sea) and Hades (who ruled the underworld).
- Zeus's sister and wife, Hera, the goddess of marriage, who is frequently jealous and vindictive of Zeus's other lovers.
- Their sisters Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, and Demeter, the goddess of grain and culture .
- Zeus's children:
- Athena (goddess of warfare and wisdom).
- Hermes (a messenger god and god of commerce).
- the twins Apollo (god of the sun, music, and prophecy) and Artemis (goddess of the hunt and of wild animals).
- Dionysos (god of wine and theatre).
- Aphrodite (goddess of beauty and love), who was married to Hephaestus (deformed god of the forge).
- Ares (god of war and lover of Aphrodite) are also part of the traditional pantheon.
- Hephaestus was in some mythologies the son of Zeus while in others the fatherless son of Hera.

Hermes and the Infant Dionysos by Praxiteles: Here, Hermes cares for the now motherless Dionysos. Originally, Hermes held a bunch of grapes, with which he teased the infant god of wine. c. 4th century BCE.

Heroes

Heroes, who were often demigods , were also important characters in Greek mythology. The two most important heroes are Perseus and Hercules.

Perseus

Perseus is known for defeating the Gorgon, Medusa. He slew her with help from the gods: Athena gave him armor and a reflective shield, and Hermes provided Perseus with winged sandals so he could fly.

Hercules

Hercules was a strong but unkind man, a drunkard who conducted huge misdeeds and social faux pas. Hercules was sent on twelve labors to atone for his sins as punishment for his misdeeds. These deeds, and several other stories, were often depicted in art, on ceramic pots, or on temple metopes . The most famous of his deeds include slaying both the Nemean Lion and the Hydra, capturing Cerberus (the dog of the underworld), and obtaining the apples of the Hesperides.

Theseus

A third hero, Theseus, was an Athenian hero known for slaying King Minos's Minotaur . Other major heros in Greek mythology include the warriors and participants of the Trojan War, such as Achilles, Ajax, Odysseus, Agamemnon, Paris, Hector, and Helen.

Hero cults were another popular form of Greek worship that involved the honoring of the dead, specifically the dead heroes of the Trojan War. The sites of hero worship were usually old Bronze Age sites or tombs that the ancient Greeks recognized as important or sacred, which they then connected to their own legends and stories.

Hercules and Cerberus : Hercules bringing Cerberus back to King Eurystheus. Black figure hydra. c. 525 BCE.

Sacred Spaces

Greek worship was centered on the temple. The temple was considered the home of the god, and a cult statue of the god would be erected in the central room, or the naos. Temples generally followed the same basic rectangular plan, although a round temple, known as a tholos , were used at some sites in starting in the Classical period.

Temples were oriented east to face the rising sun. Patrons would leave offerings for the gods, such as small votives, large statues, libations or costly goods. Due to the wealth dedicated to the gods, the temples often became treasuries that held and preserved the wealth of the city. Greek temples would be extensively decorated, and their construction was a long and costly endeavor.

Rituals and animal sacrifices in honor of the god or goddess would take place outside, in front of the temple. Rituals often included a large number of people, and sacrifice was a messy business that was best done outdoors. The development and decoration of temples is a primary focus in the study of Greek art and culture.

Sacrificial scene: Scene of a sacrifice. Attic red-figure bell krater. Circa 430–420 BCE. Athens, Greece.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Map of Ancient Greece.. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/6/6b/Greecemap.gif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Greek Dark Ages. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Dark_Ages. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pottery in the Greek Geometric Period. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10748. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Orientalizing Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Orientalizing_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Archaic Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaic_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- polis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/polis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- File:Map greek sanctuaries-en.svg - Wikimedia Commons. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Map_greek_sanctuaries-en.svg&page=1. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bell-krater sacrifice Pothos Painter Louvre G496. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bell-krater_sacrifice_Pothos_Painter_Louvre_G496.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Herakles Kerberos Eurystheus Louvre E701. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Herakles_Kerberos_Eurystheus_Louvre_E701.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 281px-Hermes_di_Prassitele,_at_Olimpia,_front_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29107624. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 257px-0029MAN-Themis.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2935418. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hellenistic religion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_religion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Greek hero cult. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_hero_cult. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Religion in ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece%23Religion_and_mythology. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- libation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/libation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- demigod. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/demigod. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Titan (Mythology). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_(mythology). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Themis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Themis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.1: Introduction to Ancient Greece is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.2: The Geometric Period

Pottery in the Greek Geometric Period

The Geometric period in Greek art is distinguished by a reliance on geometric shapes to create human and animal figures as well as abstract décor.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key characteristics of the pottery produced during the Geometric period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Geometric period marked the end of Greece's Dark Age and lasted from 900 to 700 BCE.
- The Geometric period derives its name from the dominance of geometric motifs in vase painting. Monumental kraters and amphorae were made and decorated as grave markers. These vessels are characteristic of Geometric vase painting during this period.
- The most famous vessels from this period uses a technique called horror vacui , in which every space of the surface is filled with imagery .

Key Terms

- **horror vacui**: From the Latin, fear of empty space, it is a style of painting where the entire surface of a space is filled with patterns and figures.
- **amphora**: A two-handled jar with a narrow neck that was used in ancient times to store or carry wine or oils.
- **krater**: An ancient Greek vessel for mixing water and wine.

Geometric Pottery

In the eleventh century BCE, the citadel centers of the Mycenaeans were abandoned and Greece fell into a period with little cultural or social progression. Signs of civilization including literacy, writing, and trade were lost and the population on mainland Greece plummeted.

During the Proto-Geometric period (1050–900 BCE), painting on ceramics began to re-emerge. These vessels were only decorated with abstract geometric shapes adopted from Mycenaean pottery. Ceramicists began using the fast wheel to create vessels, which allowed for new monumental heights.

Proto-Geometric amphora: Proto-Geometric amphora, c. 975–950 BCE.

In the Geometric period that followed, figures once more became present on the vessel. The period lasted from 900 to 700 BCE and marked the end of the Greek Dark Ages. A new Greek culture emerged during this time. The population grew, trade began once more, and the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet for writing.

Unlike the Mycenaeans, this culture was more focused on the people of the polis , which is reflected in the art of this period. The period gets its name from the reliance on geometric shapes and patterns in its art, and even their use in depicting both human and animal figures.

Athens

The city of Athens became the center for pottery production. A potter's quarter in the section of the city known as the Kerameikos was located on either side of the Dipylon Gate, one of the city's west gates. The potters lived and work inside the gate in the city, while outside the gate, along the road, was a large cemetery.

In the Geometric period, monumental-sized kraters and amphorae up to six feet tall were used as grave markers for the burials just outside the gate. Kraters marked male graves, while amphorae marked female graves.

The Dipylon Master, an unknown painter whose hand is recognized on many different vessels, displays the great expertise required for decorating these funerary markers. The vessels were first thrown a wheel, an important technological development at the time, before painting began. Both the Diplyon Krater and Dipylon Amphora demonstrate the main characteristics of painting during this time.

For one, the entire vessel is decorated in a style known as horror vacui, a style in which the entire surface of the medium is filled with imagery. A decorative meander is on the lip of the krater and on many registers of the amphora. This geometric motif is constructed from a single, continuous line in a repeated shape or motif.

The main scene is depicted on the widest part of the pot's body. These scenes relate to the funerary aspect of the pot and may depict mourners, a prothesis (a ritual of laying the body out and mourning), or even funerary games and processions.

On the Dipylon Krater, two registers depict a processional scene, an ekphora, (the transportation of the body to the cemetery) and the prothesis. The dead man of the prothesis scene is seen on the upper register. He is laid out on a bier and mourners, distinguished by their hands tearing at their hair, surround the body. Above the body is a shroud, which the artist depicts above and not over the body in order to allow the viewer to see the entirety of the scene.

On the register below, chariots and soldiers form a funerary procession. The soldiers are identified by their uniquely shaped shields. The Dipylon Amphora depicts just a prothesis in a wide a register around the pot.

In both vessels, men and women are distinguished by protruding triangles on their chest or waist to represent breasts or a penis. Every empty space in these scenes is filled with geometric shapes—M's, diamonds, starbursts—demonstrating the Geometric painter's horror vacui.

Geometric amphora: Geometric amphora, from the Dipylon Cemetery, Athens, Greece, c. 740 BCE.

Geometric krater: Geometric krater. From the Dipylon Cemetery, Athens, Greece, c. 740 BCE.

Sculpture in the Greek Geometric Period

Although derived from geometric shapes, the Ancient Greek sculptures of the Geometric period show some artistic observation of nature.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key characteristics of the sculptures produced during the Geometric period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Geometric sculptures are primarily small scale and made of bronze , terra cotta , or ivory . The bronze figures were produced using the lost-wax method of casting .
- The human and animal figures produced during this period have geometric features, although the legs on humans appear relatively naturalistic.
- Geometric bronzes were typically left as votive offerings at shrines and sanctuaries , such as those at Delphi and Olympia.
- Horses came to symbolize wealth due to the high costs of their upkeep.

Key Terms

- **votive**: An type of offering deposited within a religious site without the purpose of display or retrieval.

The ancient Greek sculptures of the Geometric period , although derived from geometric shapes, bear evidence of an artistic observation of nature in some circumstances. Small-scale sculptures, usually made of bronze, terra cotta, or ivory, were commonly produced during this time. Bronzes were made using the lost-wax technique, probably introduced from Syria, and were often left as votive offerings at sanctuaries such as Delphi and Olympia.

Human Figures

The human figures are made of a triangle as a torso that supports a bulbous head with a triangular chin and nose. Their arms are cylindrical, and only their legs have a slightly more naturalistic shape. These attributes can be seen in a small sculpture of a seated man drinking from a cup that displays the typical modeling figures as simple, linear forms that enclose open space . Especially noteworthy are his elongated arms that mirror the dimensions of his legs.

Seated Male Figure: This is made of bronze and created around 750–700 BCE. Note how the statue's elongated arms mirror the dimensions of his legs.

A relatively naturalistic rendering of human legs is also evident in Man and Centaur, also known as Heracles and Nessos (c. 750–730 BCE). Without the equine back and hind legs, the centaur portion of the sculpture is a shorter man with human legs.

Like the seated man above, the two figures feature elongated arms, with the right arm of the centaur forming one continuous line with the left arm of the man. While the seated man appears to be clean shaven, the figures in Man and Centaur wear beards, which usually symbolized maturity. The hollow eye sockets of the figure of the man probably once held inlay for a more realistic appearance.

Man and Centaur (Heracles and Nessos) : This bronze statue was made around 750–730 BCE.

Animal Figures

Animals, including bulls, deer, horses, and birds, were also based in geometry. Horse figurines were commonly used as offerings to the gods. The animals themselves became symbols of wealth and status due to the high cost of keeping them. Equine bodies may be described as rectangles pinched in the middle with rectangular legs and tail and are similar in shape to deer or bulls.

The heads of these mammals are more distinctive, as the horse's neck arches , while the bull and deer have cylindrical faces distinguished by horns or ears. While the animals and people are based in basic geometric shapes, the artists clearly observed their subjects in order to highlight these distinguishing characters.

Geometric Horse statuette: This bronze statue from Olympia, Greece, circa 700 BCE.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- NAMA Atticc grave-amphora by Dipylon Painter. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NAMA_Atticc_grave-amphora_by_Dipylon_Painter_.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Protogeometric amphora BM A1124. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Protogeometric_amphora_BM_A1124.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- NAMA Hirschfeld painter. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NAMA_Hirschfeld_painter.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Meander (art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Meander_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Horror vacui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Horror_vacui. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kerameikos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerameikos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Geometric art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Geometric_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Greece%23Early_Iron_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Protogeometric art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Protogeometric_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pottery of ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pottery_of_ancient_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- krater. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/krater. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- amphora. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/amphora. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Horror Vacui in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/horror-vacui/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 353px-Greek_-_Seated_Male_Figure_-_Walters_54789_-_View_A.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18792877. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Geometric-Man+Centaur_750-730BCE.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikispaces. **Located at**: greeksculpture.wikispaces.com/Geometric+Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 372px-Greek_-_Geometric_Horse_Statuette_-_Walters_542378.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18843678. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ancient Greek Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Statuette of a Horse. **Provided by**: The J. Paul Getty Museum. **Located at**: http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/29638/unknown-maker-statuette-of-a-horse-greek-750-700-bc/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Geometric Period 900 - 700 BCE. **Provided by**: Wikispaces. **Located at**: bowersarthistory.wikispaces.com/Geometric+Period?showComments=1. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Geometric Period. **Provided by**: Wikispaces. **Located at**: greeksculpture.wikispaces.com/Geometric+Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.2: The Geometric Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.3: The Orientalizing Period

Vase Painting in the Orientalizing Period

During the Orientalizing period, Greek art evolved to feature a blend of Near Eastern and Egyptian stylistic conventions.

Learning Objectives

Examine Greek vase painting during this period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Orientalizing period lasted from 700 to 600 BCE in Greece. During this time, trade with foreign cultures from Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Ancient Near East allowed for new artistic conventions to influence and be incorporated into Greek art.
- The Corinthians developed the technique of black-figure painting. Corinthian black-figure vases in the Orientalizing period are distinguishable by the inclusion of exotic and mythical animals. This style quickly spread throughout Greece, and artists later developed uniquely Greek images.
- Proto-Attic pottery refers to vases produced in Athens and the surrounding areas. This style is distinguished by the use of orange clay, the presence of simple human forms , and the first depictions of mythological scenes in vase painting.

Key Terms

- **black figure painting**: A style of antique Greek vase painting where the figures are painted onto the pot with a slip that, when fired, turns black. The outlines and details of the figures are incised before firing. Additional red and white pigments may also be added to the pot.
- **Proto-Attic**: A term applied to Orientalizing pottery from Athens and its environs.

The Orientalizing Period

The Orientalizing Period followed the Geometric period and lasted for about a century, from 700 to 600 BCE. This period was distinguished by international influences—from the Ancient Near East, Egypt, and Asia Minor—each of which contributed a distinctive Eastern style to Greek art.

The close contact between cultures developed from increasing trade and even colonization. Motifs , creatures, and styles were borrowed from other cultures by the Greeks, who transformed them into a unique Greek–Eastern mix of style and motifs.

Corinthian Pottery

During the Orientalizing period in Corinth human figures were rarely seen on vases. Animals such as lions, griffins, sphinxes , and sirens were depicted instead.

Palmettes and lotus blossoms were used instead of geometric patterns to fill empty space , although on some vessels negative space became more prominent. This oriental black figure style originated in the city of Corinth, spread to Athens, and was exported throughout Greece.

Corinthian black figure jug: Corinthian black figure jug with animal frieze, circa 580 BCE.

Black Figure Painting

The Corinthians developed the technique of black figure painting during this period. Black figure pottery was carefully constructed and fired three different times to produce the unique red and black colors on each vase.

The black color came from a slip painted onto the vessel, after which incised lines were drawn on to outline and detail the figures. Additionally, red and white pigments could be added for more color or to differentiate details.

The unpainted portions of the vase would remain the original red-orange color of the pot. The full effect of this style of painting would not have been seen until after the vase emerged from its firings in the kiln . As the style spread, the subject matter changed from strictly Near Eastern animals to scenes from Greek mythology and everyday life.

Proto-Attic Pottery

Pottery produced during the Orientalizing period across the Isthmus of Corinth in Athens is known as Proto-Attic. In this region, floral and animal motifs are common, but the human figure appears in the work of the most prominent painters such as the Analatos Painter, the Mesogeia Painter, and the Polyphemos Painter.

The Proto-Attic style marked the first depictions of discernibly Greek religious and mythological themes in vase painting. The bodies of men and animals were depicted in silhouette, though their heads were drawn in outline. Women were drawn completely in outline. Proto-Attic vases are usually distinguished by their orange clay, which is available in the Athens area.

The Polyphemos Painter, The Blinding of Polyphemos, c. 600 BCE: This detail from a Proto-Attic amphora shows the outline and silhouette-based forms in which the human body was depicted at the time, as well as the orange clay available to Attic ceramicists.

Sculpture in the Greek Orientalizing Period

Sculpture produced during the Orientalizing period shares stylistic attributes with sculpture produced in Egypt and the Near East.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Greek sculpture during the Orientalizing period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Sculpture during this time was influenced by Egyptian and Near Eastern artistic conventions. Rigid, plank-like bodies, as well as its reliance on pattern to depict texture , characterized Greek sculpture in the Orientalizing period.
- The Daedalic style , named for the mythical inventor Daedalus, refers the use of patterning and geometric shapes (reminiscent of the Geometric period) during the seventh century BCE.
- The differences between the Lady of Auxerre and the Mantiklos Apollo demonstrate the early establishment of traditional social expectations of the sexes in ancient Greek culture .

Key Terms

- **kore**: A sculpture of a young woman from pre-Classical Greece.
- **Daedalic**: A style of sculpture during the Greek Orientalizing period noted for its use of patterns to create texture, as well as its reliance on geometric shapes and stiff, rigid bodily postures.

The Orientalizing Period lasted for about a century, from 700 to 600 BCE. This period was distinguished by international influences, from the Ancient Near East, Egypt, and Asia Minor, each of which contributed a distinctive Eastern style to Greek art. The close contact between cultures developed from increasing trade and even colonization.

Styles were borrowed from other cultures by the Greeks who transformed them into a unique Greek-Eastern mix of style and motifs . Male and female sculptures produced during this time share interesting similarities, but also bear differences that inform the viewer about society's expectations of men and women.

The Lady of Auxerre

A small limestone statue of a kore (maiden), known as the Lady of Auxerre (650–625 BCE), from Crete demonstrates the style of early Greek figural sculptures. This style is known as Daedalic sculpture, named for the mythical creator of King Minos's labyrinth , Daedalus. The style combines Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs.

The Lady of Auxerre, circa 650–625 BCE: This small limestone statue is possibly from Crete.

The Lady of Auxerre is stocky and plank-like. Her waist is narrow and cinched, like the waists seen in Minoan art. She is disproportionate, with long rigid legs and a short torso. A dress encompasses nearly her entire body—it tethers her legs together and restricts her potential for movement. The rigidity of the body recalls pharaonic portraiture from Ancient Egypt .

Her head is distinguished with large facial features, a low brow, and stylized hair. The hair appears to be braided, and falls down in rigid rows divided by horizontal bands. This style recalls a Near Eastern use of patterns to depict texture and decoration.

Her face and hair are reminiscent of the Geometric period. The face forms an inverted triangle wedged between the triangles formed be the hair that frames her face. Traces of paint tell us that this statue would have originally be painted with black hair and a dress of red and blue with a yellow belt.

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/53001

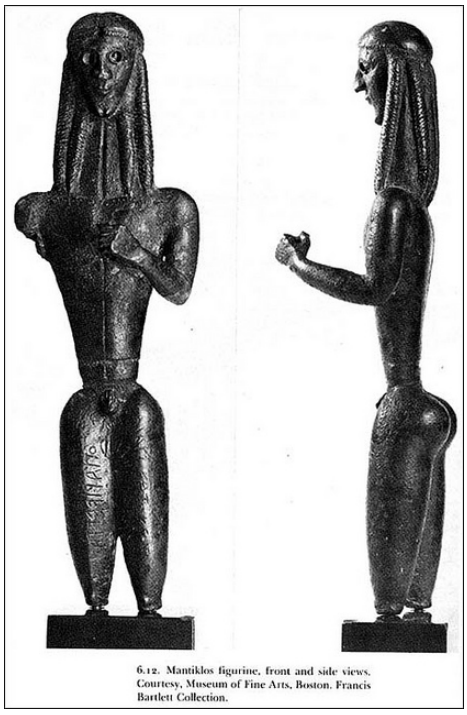
Lady of Auxerre reconstruction: A reconstruction of the original Orientalizing sculpture. Cambridge University.

The Mantiklos Apollo

There are no inscriptions on sculpture before the appearance of the bronze Mantiklos Apollo (early seventh century BCE) found in Thebes. The figure, named for the individual who left it as an offering , is that of a standing man with a rigid and somewhat Daedalic form.

His legs bear the inscription, "Mantiklos offered me as a tithe to Apollo of the silver bow; do you, Phoibos [Apollo], give some pleasing favor in return." The inscription is a declaration of the statuette to Apollo, followed by a request for favors in return.

Apart from the novelty of recording its own purpose, this sculpture adapts the formulae of later Orientalized sculptures, as seen in the shorter more triangular face and slightly advancing left leg. This is sometimes seen as anticipating the greater expressive freedom of the later seventh century BCE. As such, the Mantiklos figure is referred to in some quarters as proto-Daedalic.



6.12. Mantiklos figurine, front and side views. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Francis Bartlett Collection.

Mantiklos Apollo: Bronze Early 7th century BCE. Thebes. The side view shows the separation of the figure's arm from his chest and his slightly advancing left leg.

Similarities of the Statues

Despite the separation of several decades and over 200 miles, the Mantiklos Apollo and the Lady of Auxerre share interesting similarities, including their long plaited hair, cinched waist, stylized smile, and hand raised to the chest—all of which recall ancient Egyptian sculpture. Although the right arm of the Mantiklos Apollo is missing, the position of its shoulder implies a possible position similar to that of the left arm of the Lady of Auxerre, straight at its side.

However, we can already see striking differences that will remain the standard in Greek art for centuries. The male body, as a public entity entitled to citizenship, is depicted nude and free to move. This freedom of movement is seen not only in the legs of the Apollo figure but also in the separation of his hand from his chest.

On the other hand, the female body, as a private entity without individual rights, is clothed and denied movement. While the Mantiklos Apollo holds his hand parallel to his chest, the Lady of Auxerre places her hand directly on hers, maintaining the closed form expected of a respectable woman.

Temple Architecture in the Greek Orientalizing Period

The temples of the Greek Orientalizing period had simple plans and sculpture that were influenced by styles from Egypt and the Near East.

Learning Objectives

Identify some of the outside influences on Greek temples

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The earliest stone temples in ancient Greece derive their structure from Minoan and Mycenaean designs.
- Temple A at Prinias, Crete is the earliest known Greek temple decorated with sculpture . It consisted of a single chamber and a portico with three simple columns .
- The remains of friezes from Temple A share stylistic attributes with Egyptian, Near Eastern, and contemporaneous free-standing Greek Orientalizing sculptures.

Key Terms

- **entablature**: The lintel area of a temple portico.
- **anta**: The simplest form of an ancient Greek temple, it consists of a pronaos (portico) with two columns and a naos, or cella.
- **lamassu**: A mythical winged creature with the head of a human and the body of a lion or bull.
- **capital**: The topmost part of a column.
- **base**: The bottommost part of a column.
- **cella**: Also known as a naos, the central chamber of a temple, usually where the cult statue was housed.

Greek Temple Architecture

The basic principles for the development of Greek temple architecture have their roots between the tenth and seventh centuries BCE. In its simplest form as a naos or cella , the temple was a simple rectangular shrine with protruding side walls (antae) that formed a small porch. By adding columns to this small basic structure, the Greeks triggered the development and variety of their temple architecture.

Anta schematic: Early anta-planned temples consisted of a portico (pronaos) and an inner chamber (naos/cella) atop a simple platform. Two columns marked the entrance to the inner chamber.

The building of stone temples first began during the Orientalizing period. Earlier temples were made from wood and other perishable materials and used terra cotta revetments in the form of rectangular and circular panels. With the introduction of stone as a building material, revetments became unnecessary and were replaced by sculptural ornamentation.

These temples derive their structure from Minoan and Mycenaean architectural designs. Minoan shrines, as seen at Knossos, were tripartite shrines fronted by three columns, while the plan of the Mycenaean king's chamber (or megaron) was appropriated for use by the gods.

Oriental Greek stone temples were fronted by three columns and one entrance which lead into a single room chamber (cella), where the cult statue would be placed. The temple cella was reserved for the cult statue, while cult rituals (often sacrifices) took place outside in front of the temple and usually around an altar.

Temple A at Prinias

Temple A at Prinias (c. 650–600 BCE) on the island of Crete is the oldest known Greek temple decorated with sculpture. Its plan was similar to the anta design with a third column in the center in front of the doorway. One step spanning the width of the facade led to the pronaos . The columns were very simple, rectangular (as opposed to cylindrical) blocks with very thin bases and capitals . Unlike Minoan columns, the shafts of the columns of Temple A did not taper; rather, their width remained constant for the entire length.

On the entablature , the frieze of the facade consisted of a series of reliefs depicting a procession of riders on horseback with little variation. The scale of the horses dwarfs that of their riders. Each horse stands in profile, while each rider faces the viewer with his sword raised and his shield seemingly connecting his head to his legs.

Although their shields cover most of their bodies, the seemingly bare state of their legs implies that the riders might be nude, as was typical for the male body in art. Each rider has a stylized nose, eyes, and eyebrows and wears a helmet. Like free-standing sculptures of the time, the hairstyle of the riders is plaited in a somewhat Egyptian style .

A meander runs atop the reliefs. The current cracked condition of the frieze is a likely indicator that it was assembled in a piecemeal fashion, as opposed to being carved as a singular entablature. Atop the entablature sat sculptures of two winged female creatures resembling the sphinx or the lamassu of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian cultures .

Temple A portico frieze: Made of marble and originally from Prinias, Crete, c. 650–600 BCE.

Behind the facade of Temple A sat a doorway with an intricately designed lintel . Its frieze consisted of six stylized panthers standing in high relief . This motif is typical of northern Syria.

Unlike the horses on the façade frieze, each group of three panthers face each other with their heads turned toward the viewer. Between each group sits a plain rectangular recess, probably to mark the location of the central column that supported the lintel.

Atop the frieze sit two stylized female sculptures in the round who face each other. One figure places her hands flatly on her lap, while the other holds her hands in a position to accommodate a cup or similar object. It is believed that these figures represent goddesses, although the identities of those goddesses remain disputed.

Each sits in profile on a plain backless bench. The face of each figure has almond-shaped eyes and stylized eyebrows similar to those on Egyptian sculptures. Their hair is plaited and falls to either side of their shoulders.

Like the free-standing sculptures of the Orientalizing period, each figure on the lintel of Temple A wears Egyptian-style headgear with geometric patterns and cloaks atop their geometrically patterned dresses, which are cinched at the waist. While their feet protrude from beneath their long skirts, the blocks that define the lower parts of their bodies provide no acknowledgement of the body beneath the clothing.

Lintel from Temple A: Made of marble and originally from Prinias, Crete, c. 650–600 BCE.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Corinthian jug animal frieze 580 BC Staatliche Antikensammlungen. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Corinthian_jug_animal_frieze_580_BC_Staatliche_Antikensammlungen.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 511px-Polyphemus_Eleusis_2630.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1353019. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pottery of ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pottery_of_ancient_Greece%23Orientalizing_style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Orientalizing period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Orientalizing_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Black-figure pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-figure_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- black figure painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/black%20figure%20painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Analatos Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Analatos_Painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Polyphemos Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyphemos_Painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mesogeia Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesogeia_Painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mantiklos-Apollo.jpg. **Provided by**: Flickr. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/47357563@N06/7953461862. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- f-auxerre-louvre-ma3098-n1.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lady_of_Auxerre_Louvre_Ma3098_n1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lady of Auxerre reconstruction.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lady_of_Auxerre_University_of_Cambridge.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Daedalic in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/daedalic/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lady of Auxerre. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_of_Auxerre. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Temple A frieze.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26230280. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Daedalic_lintel_from_Prinias,_650-600_BC,_AMH,_NM_231,_145380.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40467692. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anta.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7664645. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Megaron. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Megaron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prinias. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prinias. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cella. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/cella. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Temple: Origins. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_temple%23Origins. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.3: The Orientalizing Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.4: The Archaic Period

Delphi and Greek Treasuries

Delphi was an important cult site for Apollo and was home to many treasuries that housed the community's offerings to the god.

Learning Objectives

Describe the treasuries built during the Archaic period in Delphi, with attention to both their style and function

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Delphi was an essential city and sanctuary site for the Greeks. Not only was the city the main cult site for Apollo, it was also the home of the Delphic Oracle and the Panhellenic games, known as the Python Games, which honored Apollo's slaying of the Python.
- The site is known for its numerous treasuries . These treasuries were built by various poleis to house their city-states ' offerings and votives to Apollo. The treasuries were small, single-room structures that were decorated to commemorate the deeds of the city.
- The Siphian Treasury was built in an Ionic style in 530 BCE with caryatids instead of columns . The continuous frieze and pediments are high reliefs carved in the Archaic style. The figures on the pediment appear more stiff and rigid than the figures on the frieze, who are engaged in battle.
- The Athenian Treasury was built between 510 and 490 BCE to honor Athenian military power against the Persians. The structure is Doric and while only fragments of the metopes survive, these fragments display the emergence of the naturalism that is found in Archaic sculpture.

Key Terms

- **peristyle**: An external colonnade surrounding the perimeter of a temple.
- **stylobate**: The level of a temple platform on which its columns stand.
- **triglyph**: Three vertically channeled tablets of the Doric frieze in classical architecture, so called because of the angular channels in them.
- **tripod**: A three-legged stand or mount.
- **treasury**: A place where state or royal money and valuables are stored.
- **gigantomachy**: The battle fought between the Titans and the Olympian gods for supremacy of the cosmos.
- **columns in antis**: The upright posts located between two pillars or piers on either side of a doorway or entrance to a Greek temple.
- **metope**: A rectangular architectural element that fills the space between two triglyphs in a Doric frieze.
- **Panhellenic**: Relating to all of Greece or all of the Greeks.

Delphi

The ancient site of Delphi, located in central Greece on the slope of Mt. Parnassus, was known for its Sanctuary of Apollo, the Delphic Oracle, and the Pythian Games. Delphi was home to the dragon Python who protected the navel of the earth.

Apollo slew the Python, establishing his presence at the site. The Panhellenic Pythian games that were held every four years, along with musical compositions , commemorated Apollo's victory over the beast.

Not only was the site the main place of worship for the god Apollo, it was also the home of an oracle. The oracle was a sibyl or priestess known as a Pythia.

According to myth, when Apollo slew the Python, the creature's body fell into a fissure and began decomposing. The oracle would place her tripod seat over the fissure, inhale the fumes, and then would be possessed by Apollo, allowing him to speak through her.

The Delphic Oracle was an essential part of Greek life and was consulted for matters public and private, small and large, and so had commanding power over the lives of the Greeks. The oracle's prophecies were usually unintelligible and would be translated into poetic meter by priests.

Temple of Apollo

The site of Delphi is dominated by a central Temple of Apollo, a fourth-century BCE replacement of the Archaic sixth-century temple. One peristyle of Doric columns (the order used in Archaic architecture) surrounded the perimeter of the stylobate that rested atop two steps.

Inside the Temple of Apollo was the seat of the Pythia, in a small restricted room in the back of the naos , known as an adyton, which translates to English as not to be entered.

Temple of Apollo: Reconstructed Doric columns mark the east end (front) of the temple.

There was also a large theater built into the hillside located just above the Temple of Apollo. The theater was first built in the fourth century BCE and renovated multiple times in the following centuries. It could seat 5,000 spectators and offered a view of the entire sanctuary site and the valley.

Treasuries

The road leading up to the sanctuary site of Apollo was lined with votive statues and treasuries. The treasuries were built by different poleis to honor the oracle, thank her for her advice, and commemorate military victories. These small, temple-like structures held the votives and offerings made to Apollo as well as a small proportion of the spoils won from battle from each polis . Because the buildings held a wealth of materials and goods, they are known as treasuries. These buildings were single-room naosoi (plural of naos) fronted by two columns in antis and decorated in either the Doric or Ionic style.

Siphnian Treasury

The Siphnian Treasury was built for the polis of Siphnos, a city-state that occupied a Cycladic island. The Siphnians had large gold and silver mines, from which they profited enormously, and they used the profits to erect their treasury at Delphi.

The treasury housed their gold and silver gifts to the gods. The Siphian Treasury was the first structure built entirely from marble when it was erected in 530 BCE and was elaborately decorated.

The two columns in the antis were not typical columns but caryatids, support columns that took the shape of women. A continuous Ionic frieze that wrapped around the top of the treasury beneath the pediment depicted scenes from Greek mythology, including a gigantomachy on the north side, the Judgment of Paris on the west side, and gods watching the sack of Troy by the Greeks on the south and east sides.

The east pediment recounts the story of Herakles stealing Apollo's tripod, which visually connects the pediment and the treasury to the oracle site at the Temple of Apollo.

Herakles and Apollo: Herakles stealing the tripod of Apollo. From the east pediment of the Siphnian Treasury. Marble. c. 530 BCE. Siphnian Treasury, Delphi, Greece.

Gigantomachy: A gigantomachy scene from the north frieze of the Siphnian Treasury. Marble. c. 530 BCE. Siphnian Treasury, Delphi, Greece.

The figures are carved in an Archaic style and in high relief, and they are almost, but not entirely, freed from the wall of the frieze. While the figures appear to be in motion, with wide stances and arms open wide for battle, the majority of them stand with both feet flat on ground . This inhibits the sense of motion given by the rest of their bodies.

The pedimental figures are especially rigid and linear, although the figures are no longer scaled to fit into the small corners of the pediment. When looking at these figures, from the front they appear to appropriately model the body, while from the side the figures appear block-like, emphasizing the fact that they were carved from stone.

Athenian Treasury

The Athenian treasury at Delphi was built between 510 and 480 BCE to commemorate the Athenian victory over the Persians during the Battle of Marathon. Like the Siphnian Treasury, the Athenian Treasury was constructed entirely of marble.

The treasury has Doric columns and a frieze of triglyphs and thirty metopes that depict scenes from the life of Theseus, an Athenian mythological hero, and Herakles. The metopes also display the development of Archaic relief and temple decoration. The figures do not feel forced into their frame but instead begin to fill out the scene.

Most of the scenes consist of only two characters and few scenes, such as Herakles fighting the Ceryean Hind (an enormous deer), display a new sense of ingenuity. The figure of Herakles breaks out of the frame as he leans on the hind's back, trying to catch it.

Furthermore, the figures, unlike those on the Siphnian pediment, appear modeled from all sides, as opposed to just frontally.

Herakles and Ceryean Hind: Metope depicting Herakles and Ceryean Hind. Marble. c. 510-480 BCE. Treasury of Athens, Delphi, Greece

Athenian treasury: Athenian treasury. Marble. c. 510–490 BCE, Delphi, Greece.

Temple Architecture in the Greek Archaic Period

The temples of the Archaic period are the first stone temples built in Greece. They demonstrate a developing knowledge of stone building through their use of decorative spaces on buildings.

Learning Objectives

Explain the sculptural design choices on different areas of the temples: identify the naos, pronaos, prostyle, antae, and opisthodomos, and indicate the specific features that were characteristic of the Doric order

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The design of Greek stone temples was influenced by Mycenaean megarons (a porch with columns in antis and a central room) and their earlier wooden temples. Many decorative elements, such as the triglyphs , replicated the visual design of wooden temples in stone.

- During the Archaic period, the Greeks began to develop the ideal temple design. It included a central naos surrounded on two ends by an opisthodomos and a pronaos , but accessed only through the pronaos. These rooms were surrounded by a peripteral colonnade on a raised platform with two or three steps.
- The Doric order is the oldest Greek classification of architecture. It is identified by its columns and its frieze . The columns had no base, a bulge in the middle of their shaft , and squashed, flared capitals . The frieze was divided by triglyphs and metopes.
- Designers utilized the spaces on the metopes to depict individual mythological events on earlier temples, and then as a collective series of moments in an event, such as the Twelve Labors of Herakles on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The pedimental spaces were also used to depict heroic or mythological events at either end of the temples. The Temple of Hera I and the Temple of Hera II at Paestum, Italy demonstrated the development of the Doric style from its earliest stage through various refinements as the Greeks became more comfortable with building in stone.
- The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina is one of the last temples whose design did not conform to the architectural standards of the time.

Key Terms

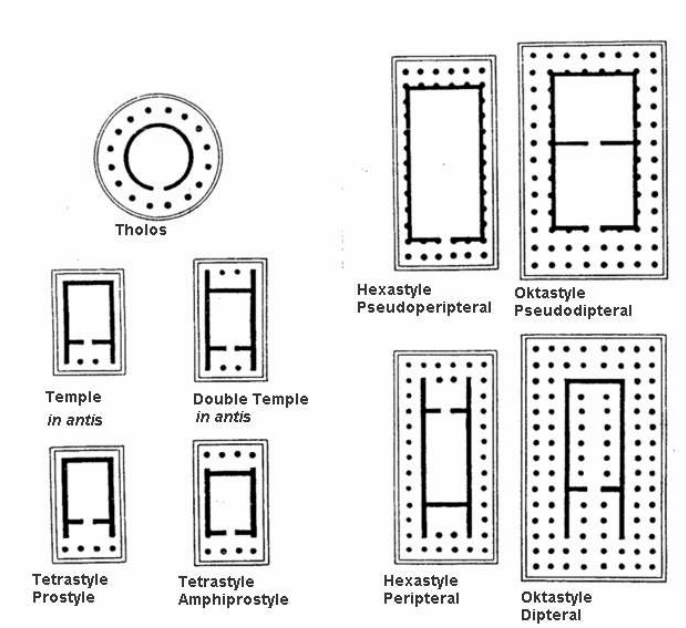
- **peripteral**: Surrounded by a single row of columns.
- **naos**: The inner chamber of a temple that housed the cult statue. Also known as a cella.
- **megaron**: The rectangular great hall in a Mycenaean building, usually supported with pillars.
- **pediment**: The triangular space left above the frieze by the shape of the roof at the narrowest ends of the temple.
- **entasis**: A slight convex curvature introduced into the shaft of a column for aesthetic reasons, or to compensate for the illusion of concavity.
- **stylobate**: A raised stone platform on which temples are erected.
- **pronaos**: The front porch of a temple.
- **anta**: The post or pillar on either side of a doorway or entrance of a Greek temple.
- **opisthodomos**: The rear room of a Greek temple.
- **votives**: Objects displayed or deposited at a sacred place without the intent of recovery or use.
- **echinus**: A convex molding that commonly bears the egg-and-dart motif.
- **entablature**: The area of a temple facade that lies horizontally atop the columns.
- **triglyph**: A decorative panel with three grooves.
- **tholos**: A circular, colonnaded building, usually a temple.
- **metope**: A rectangular architectural element that fills the space between two triglyphs in a Doric frieze.
- **prostyle**: Free-standing columns across the front of a building.

Temples of the Archaic Period

Stone temples were first built during the Archaic period in ancient Greece. Before this, they were constructed out of mud-brick and wood—simple structures that were rectangular or semi-circular in shape—that may have been enhanced with a few columns and a porch. The Archaic stone temples took their essential shape and structure from these wooden temples and the shape of a Mycenaean megaron.

Temple Design

The standard form of a Greek temple was established and then refined through the Archaic and Classical period. Most temples were rectilinear in shape and stood on a raised stone platform, known as the stylobates , which usually had two or three stairs.



Temple plans: These illustrations show various examples of Greek temples.

The main portion of the temple was the naos. To the front of the naos was the pronaos, or front porch. A door between the naos and pronaos provided access to the cult statue. Columns, known as prostyle , often stood in front of the pronaos. These were often aligned with molded projections to the end of the pronaos's wall, called the anta (plural antae). Such aligned columns were referred to as columns in antis.

A rear room, called the opisthodomos, was on the other side of the temple and naos. A wall separated the naos and opisthodomos completely. The opisthodomos was used as a treasury and held the votives and offerings left at the temple for the god or goddess. It also had a set of prostyle columns in antis that completed the symmetrical appearance of the temple.

Other Temple Plans

While this describes the standard design of Greek temples, it is not the most common form found. One notable exception to this standard was the circular tholos , dedicated to Apollo at Delphi. Columns were placed on the edge of the stylobate in a line or colonnade, which was peripteral and ran around the naos (an inner chamber that holds a cult statue) and its porches.

The first stone temples varied significantly as architects and engineers were forced to determine how to properly support a roof with such a wide span. Later architects, such as Iktinos and Kallikrates who designed the Parthenon, tweaked aspects of basic temple structure to better accommodate the cult statue.

Mathematical Scale

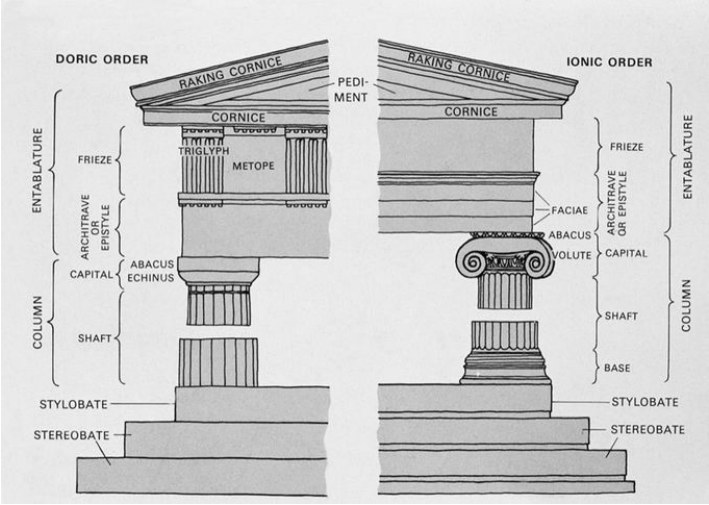
All temples, however, were built on a mathematical scale and every aspect of them is related to one another through ratios. For instance, most Greek temples (except the earliest) followed the equation $2x + 1 = y$ when determining the number of columns used in the peripteral colonnade.

In this equation, x stands for the number of columns across the front, the shorter end, while y designates the columns down the sides. The number of columns used along the length of the temple was twice the number plus one the number of columns across the front. Due to these mathematical ratios, we are able to accurately reconstruct temples from small fragments.

Doric Order

The style of Greek temples is divided into three different and distinct orders, the earliest of which is the Doric order. These temples had columns that rested directly on the stylobate without a base. Their shafts were fluted with twenty parallel grooves that tapered to a sharp point.

The capitals of Doric columns had a simple, unadorned square abacus and a flared echinus that was often short and squashed. Doric columns are also noted for the presence of entasis , or bulges in the middle of the column shaft. This was perhaps a way to create an optical illusion or to emphasize the weight of the entablature above, held up by the columns.



Doric and Ionic order: This drawing illustrates the stylistic differences between the Doric and Ionic order.

The Doric entablature was also unique to this style of temples. The frieze was decorated with alternating panels of triglyphs and metopes. The triglyphs were decorative panels with three grooves or glyphs that gave the panel its name. The stone triglyphs mimicked the head of wooden beams used in earlier temples. Between the triglyphs were the metopes.

Decorative Spaces

Sculptors used the metope spaces to depict mythological occurrences, often with historical or cultural links to the site on which the temple stood.

Herakles fights the Cretan Bull: This is one of the metopes from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. It is one of the Twelve Labors depicted on the temple.

On the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (constructed between 470BC and 456BC), the choice to sculpt the Twelve Labors of Herakles was in direct correlation with the site's Olympic Games and the spirit of triumph in physical challenge. Most sculptors attempted to use the limited and angular space of metopes to show distinct moments that filled the shape, but not all were successful in doing so.

Another space used for decoration was the pediment at each end of the temple. Due to the larger space afforded by these sections, the sculptors often chose to depict larger and more eventful scenes.

The sculptures from the pediments on the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina: These scenes show fight scenes between Greeks and Trojans, such as those described in Homer's Iliad.

The shape of the pediment made it difficult to arrange figures in a coherent and cohesive scene, so the sculptors placed the most prominent ones in the apex (the highest point of the triangle). All of these decorative sculptures would be painted in bright colors and recognizable to onlookers.

Paestum, Italy

The Greek colony at Poseidonia (now Paestum) in Italy, built two Archaic Doric temples that are still standing today .

Temple of Hera II and Temple of Hera I, Paestum, Italy. c. 500–460 BCE.: The Greek colony at Poseidonia (now Paestum) in Italy, built two Archaic Doric temples that are still standing today.

The first, the Temple of Hera I, was built in 550 BCE and differs from the standard Greek temple model dramatically. It is peripteral, with nine columns across its short ends and 18 columns along each side. The opisthodomos is accessed through the naos by two doors. There are three columns in antis across the pronaos. Inside the naos is a row of central columns, built to support the roof.

The cult statue is placed at the back, in the center, and is blocked from view by the row of columns. When examining the columns, they are large and heavy, and spaced very close together. This further denotes the Greeks unease with building in stone and the need to properly support a stone entablature and heavy roof. The capitals of the columns are round, flat, and pancake-like.

The Temple of Hera II, built almost a century later in 460 BCE, began to show the structural changes that demonstrated the Greek's comfort and developing understanding of building in stone, as well as the beginnings of a Classical temple style.

In this example, the temple was fronted by six columns, with 14 columns along its length. The opisthodomos was separated from the naos and had its own entrance and set of columns in antis. A central flight of stairs led from the pronaos to the naos and the doors opened to look upon a central cult statue. There were still interior columns; however they were moved to the side, permitting prominent display of the cult statue.

Aegina

The temple of Aphaia on the island of Aegina is an example of Archaic Greek temple design as well as of the shift in sculptural style between the Archaic and Classical periods. Aegina is a small island in the Saronic Gulf within view of Athens; in fact, Aegina and Athens were rivals.

While the temple was dedicated to the local god Aphaia, the temple's pediments depicted scenes of the Trojan War to promote the greatness of the island. These scenes involve the Greek heroes who fought at Troy—Telamon and Peleus , the fathers of Ajax and Achilles.

In an antagonistic move, the battle scenes on the pediments are overseen by Athena, and the temple's dedicated deity , Aphaia, does not appear on the pediment at all. While very little paint remains now, the entire pediment scene, triglyphs and metopes, and other parts of the temple would have been painted in bright colors.

Temple of Aphaia at Aegina, c. 500–490 BCE: The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina as it stands today.

Temple Design

The Temple of Aphaia is one of the last temples with a design that did not conform to standards of the time. Its colonnade has six columns across its width and twelve columns down its length. The columns have become more widely spaced and also more slender.

Both the pronaos and opisthodomos have two prostyle (free-standing) columns in antis and exterior access, although both lead into the temple's naos. Despite the connection between the opisthodomos and the naos, the doorway between them is much smaller than the doorway between the naos and the pronaos.

As in the Temple of Hera II, there are two rows of columns on either side of the temple's interior. In this case there are five on each side, and each colonnade has two stories. A small ramp interrupts the stylobate at the center of the temple's main entrance.

Plan of the sanctaury of the Temple of Aphaia: Ground plan of the Temple of Aphaia and the surrounding area.

Sculpture in the Greek Archaic Period

Sculpture during the Archaic period became increasing naturalistic, although this varies depending on the gender of the subject.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the kouroi and korai sculptures of the Archaic period, and recognize the increasing naturalism seen in both free-standing and pedimental sculptures of the Archaic period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Dedicatory male kouroi figures were originally based on Egyptian statues and over the Archaic period these figures developed more naturalistic nude bodies. The athletic body was an ideal form for a young Greek male and is comparable to the ideal body of the god Apollo.
- Instead of focusing on the body, female korai statues were clothed and throughout the Archaic period artists spent more time elaborating on the detailed folds and drapery of a woman's clothing. This reflected the Greek ideals for women, who were supposed to be fully clothed, modest, and demure.
- To add an additional naturalistic element to the body, the typical Archaic smile was added to both male and female statues. While today the smile seems false, to the ancient Greeks it added a level of realism.
- Pedimental sculpture in the Archaic period was often scaled to fit into the space of the pediment and served an apotropaic instead of a decorative function.
- Pedimental sculptures from the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina show a gradual move toward the naturalism of the Classical style that followed the Archaic.

Key Terms

- **Archaic smile**: A stylized expression used in sculpture from 600 to 480 BCE to suggest a sense of lifelikeness in the subject.
- **peplos**: An Ancient Greek garment, worn by women, made of a tubular piece of cloth that is folded back upon itself halfway down, until the top of the tube is worn around the waist, and the bottom covers the legs down to the ankles; the open top is then worn over the shoulders, and draped, in folds, down to the waist.
- **apotropaic**: Intended to ward off evil.

- **kouros**: A sculpture of a naked youth in Ancient Greece; the male equivalent of a kore.
- **kore**: An Ancient Greek statue of a woman, portrayed standing, usually clothed, painted in bright colors, and having an elaborate hairstyle.
- **chiton**: A loose, woolen tunic, worn by both men and women in Ancient Greece.

Sculpture in the Archaic Period

Sculpture in the Archaic Period developed rapidly from its early influences, becoming more natural and showing a developing understanding of the body, specifically the musculature and the skin. Close examination of the style's development allows for precise dating.

Most statues were commissioned as memorials and votive offerings or as grave markers, replacing the vast amphora (two-handled, narrow-necked jars used for wine and oils) and kraters (wide-mouthed vessels) of the previous periods, yet still typically painted in vivid colors.

Kouroi

Kouroi statues (singular, kouros), depicting idealized, nude male youths, were first seen during this period. Carved in the round , often from marble, kouroi are thought to be associated with Apollo; many were found at his shrines and some even depict him. Emulating the statues of Egyptian pharaohs, the figure strides forward on flat feet, arms held stiffly at its side with fists clenched. However, there are some importance differences: kouroi are nude, mostly without identifying attributes and are free-standing.

Early kouroi figures share similarities with Geometric and Orientalizing sculpture, despite their larger scale. For instance, their hair is stylized and patterned, either held back with a headband or under a cap. The New York Kouros strikes a rigid stance and his facial features are blank and expressionless. The body is slightly molded and the musculature is reliant on incised lines .

New York Kouros, c. 600 BCE: New York Kouros. Marble. Origin unknown.

As kouroi figures developed, they began to lose their Egyptian rigidity and became increasingly naturalistic. The kouros figure of Kroisos, an Athenian youth killed in battle, still depicts a young man with an idealized body. This time though, the body's form shows realistic modeling.

The muscles of the legs, abdomen, chest and arms appear to actually exist and seem to function and work together. Kroisos's hair, while still stylized, falls naturally over his neck and onto his back, unlike that of the New York Kouros, which falls down stiffly and in a single sheet. The reddish appearance of his hair reminds the viewer that these sculptures were once painted.

Kroisos, c. 530 BCE: Kroisos, from the Anavysos Group. Marble. Greece.

Archaic Smile

Kroisos's face also appears more naturalistic when compared to the earlier New York Kouros. His cheeks are round and his chin bulbous; however, his smile seems out of place. This is typical of this period and is known as the Archaic smile. It appears to have been added to infuse the sculpture with a sense of being alive and to add a sense of realism.

Kore

A kore (plural korai) sculpture depicts a female youth. Whereas kouroi depict athletic, nude young men, the female korai are fully-clothed, in the idealized image of decorous women. Unlike men—whose bodies were perceived as public, belonging to the state—women's bodies were deemed private and belonged to their fathers (if unmarried) or husbands.

However, they also have Archaic smiles, with arms either at their sides or with an arm extended, holding an offering. The figures are stiff and retain more block-like characteristics than their male counterparts. Their hair is also stylized, depicted in long strands or braids that cascade down the back or over the shoulder.

The Peplos Kore (c. 530 BCE) depicts a young woman wearing a peplos, a heavy wool garment that drapes over the whole body, obscuring most of it. A slight indentation between the legs, a division between her torso and legs, and the protrusion of her breasts merely hint at the form of the body underneath.

Remnants of paint on her dress tell us that it was painted yellow with details in blue and red that may have included images of animals. The presence of animals on her dress may indicate that she is the image of a goddess, perhaps Artemis, but she may also just be a nameless maiden.

Peplos Kore: Reconstruction of the paint on the Peplos Kore.

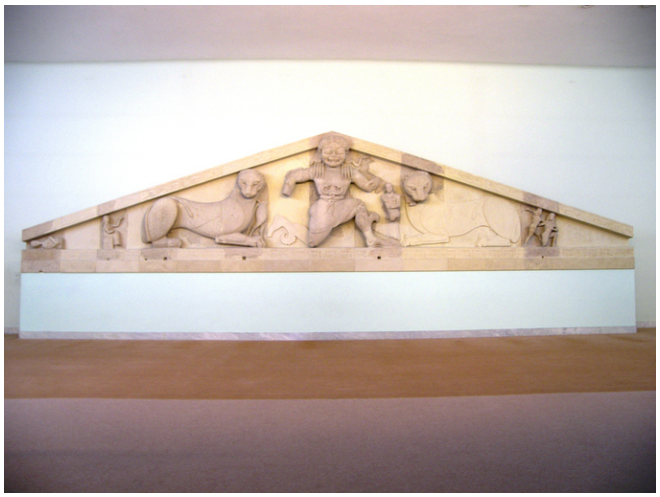
Later korai figures also show stylistic development, although the bodies are still overshadowed by their clothing. The example of a Kore (520–510 BCE) from the Athenian Acropolis shows a bit more shape in the body, such as defined hips instead of a dramatic belted waistline, although the primary focus of the kore is on the clothing and the drapery. This kore figure wears a chiton (a woolen tunic), a himation (a lightweight undergarment), and a mantle (a cloak). Her facial features are still generic and blank, and she has an Archaic smile. Even with the finer clothes and additional adornments such as jewelry, the figure depicts the idealized Greek female, fully clothed and demure.

Acropolis Kore, c. 520–510 BCE: Wearing a chiton and himation. Marble. Athens, Greece.

Pedimental Sculpture: The Temple of Artemis at Corfu

This sculpture, initially designed to fit into the space of the pediment, underwent dramatic changes during the Archaic period, seen later at Aegina. The west pediment at the Temple of Artemis at Corfu depicts not the goddess of the hunt, but the Gorgon Medusa with her children; Pegasus, a winged horse; and Chrysaor, a giant wielding a golden sword surrounded by heraldic lions.

Medusa faces outwards in a challenging position, believed to be apotropaic (warding off evil). Additional scenes include Zeus fighting a Titan, and the slaying of Priam, the king of Troy, by Neoptolemos. These figures are scaled down in order to fit into the shrinking space provided in the pediment.



Pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu, c. 600–580 BCE: Sculpture and reconstruction of the west pediment. Limestone. Corfu, Greece.

Pedimental Sculpture: The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina

Sculpted approximately one century later, the pedimental sculptures on the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina gradually grew more naturalistic than their predecessors at Corfu. The dying warrior on the west pediment (c. 490 BCE) is a prime example of Archaic sculpture. The male warrior is depicted nude, with a muscular body that shows the Greeks' understanding of the musculature of the human body. His hair remains stylized with round, geometric curls and textured patterns.

However, despite the naturalistic characteristics of the body, the body does not seem to react to its environment or circumstances. The warrior props himself up with an arm, and his whole body is tense, despite the fact that he has been struck by an arrow in his chest. His face, with its Archaic smile, and his posture conflict with the reality that he is dying.

Dying Warrior, c. 490 BCE: Marble, west pediment of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina.

Aegina: Transition between Styles

The dying warrior on the east pediment (c. 480 BCE) marks a transition to the new Classical style. Although he bears a slight Archaic smile, this warrior actually reacts to his circumstances. Nearly every part of him appears to be dying.

Instead of propping himself up on an arm, his body responds to the gravity pulling on his dying body, hanging from his shield and attempting to support himself with his other arm. He also attempts to hold himself up with his legs, but one leg has fallen over the pediment's edge and protrudes into the viewer's space. His muscles are contracted and limp, depending on which ones they are, and they seem to strain under the weight of the man as he dies.

Dying Warrior, c. 480 BCE: Marble, East Pediment of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina.

Ceramics in the Greek Archaic Period

Archaic black- and red-figure painting began to depict more naturalistic bodies by conveying form and movement.

Learning Objectives

Describe the similarities and differences between black- and red-figure painting during Greece's Archaic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Black-figure painting was used throughout the Archaic period before diminishing under the popularity of red-figure painting.
- Exekias is considered one of the most talented and influential black-figure painters due to his ability to convey emotion, use intricate lines , and create scenes that trusted the viewer to comprehend the scene.
- Red-figure painting was developed in 530 BCE by the Andokides Painter, a style that allows for more naturalism in the body due to the use of a brush.
- The first red-figure paintings were produced on bilingual vases, depicting one scene on each side, one in black figure and the other in red figure.
- The painters Euthyides and Euphronios were two of the most talented Archaic red-figure painters, with their vessels depict space , movement, and naturalism.

Key Terms

- **burin**: A chisel with a sharp point, used for engraving; an engraver.
- **slip**: A thin, slippery mix of clay and water.
- **red-figure**: One of the most important styles of figural Greek vase painting, based on the figural depictions in red color on a black background.
- **black-figure**: A style of Greek vase painting that is distinguished by silhouette-like figures on a red background.

Pottery Decoration Overview

The Archaic period saw a shift in styles of pottery decoration, from the repeating patterns of the Geometric period , through the Eastern-influenced Orientalizing style, to the more naturalistic black- and red-figure techniques. During this time, figures became more dynamic and defined by more organic—as opposed to geometric—elements.

Black-Figure Painting

Black-figure painting, which derives its name from the black figures painted on red backgrounds, was developed by the Corinthians in the seventh century BCE and became popular throughout the Greek world during the Archaic period. As painters became more confident working in the medium , human figures began to appear on vases and painters and potters began signing their creations.

The François Vase

One of the most famous early Athenian black-figure pots is a large volute krater by the potter Ergotimos and the painter Kleitias, known as the François Vase. The krater, named for the man who discovered it in the nineteenth century, depicts 270 figures on the six registers that wrap around the krater.

Unlike the monumental vases of the Geometric period, this krater stands at 66 cm (2.17 feet) tall. The surface depicts various mythological scenes with many figures labeled by name. On one side of the krater's neck are scenes from the Calydonian Boar hunt, in which several men and a powerful woman named Atalanta hunted and killed a monstrous boar sent by Artemis to terrorize the region of Calydon after the king offended her.

The other side depicts Theseus, who slayed the Minotaur , with Athenian youths and his wife Ariadne. Other registers depict scenes of the Trojan War and Peleus with his son Achilles. The detail and skill demonstrate new styles of Archaic vase painting, shifting away from past centuries' animal motifs and geometric patterns.

Instead of filling negative space with patterns and geometric designs, Kleitias leaves areas empty. The people and horses are depicted differently than Oriental and Geometric prototypes. Bodies are more accurately rendered and less dependent on geometric shapes, although profile views dominate, and sharp lines provide texture for musculature and clothing. While many figures still stand flat-footed, the limbs of people, horses, and centaurs show movement and are dramatic compositions within the confines of the style.

Francois Vase: Made by Kleitias and Ergotimos. The François Vase is an Athenian black-figure volute krater, c. 570 BCE, Chiusi, Italy.

Exekias

Exekias, considered the most prominent black-figure painter of his time, worked between 545 and 530 BCE in Athens. He is regarded by art historians as an artistic visionary whose masterful use of incision and psychologically sensitive compositions mark him as one of the greatest of all Attic vase painters. His vessels display attention to detail and precise, intricate lines.

Exekias is also well-known for reinterpreting mythologies. Instead of providing the entire story, as Kleitias did on the François Vase, he paints single scenes and relies on the viewer to interpret and understand the narrative.

One example is an amphora that depicts the Greek warriors Achilles and Ajax playing dice. Both men are decorated with fine incised details, showing elaborate textile patterns and almost every hair in place. As they wait for the next battle with the Trojans,

their game foreshadows their fates. Inscribed text allows the two figures to speak: “Achilles has rolled a four, while Ajax rolled a three.” Both men will die during the the Trojan War, but Achilles dies a hero while Ajax is consistently considered second best, eventually committing suicide.

Achilles and Ajax: By Exekias, Achilles and Ajax Playing a Dice Game. Athenian Black-figure amphora, c. 540–530 BCE. Vulci, Italy.

Red-Figure Painting

Red-figure painting developed in Athens in 530 BCE and remained popular into the Classical period. The technique is similar to black-figure painting but with key differences.

Instead of painting a figure with black slip and using a burin to scrape away the slip to create details, red-figure painting has the background painted black and the figures left the red color of the terra cotta . Black slip was painted with a brush to add detail.

Brushes could achieve more fluid lines than a burin, so details were better rendered and figures became livelier than the black-figure silhouettes. The black slip could also be diluted with water to create shades for modeling bodies or clothing. Overall, the technique allowed vase painters to create compositions that rendered the body more naturally.

Bilingual Painting

Bilingual vase painting became popular with the advent of red-figure painting. Bilingual vases were painted with a single scene on each side of the vessel, usually the same scene rendered twice. One side depicts the scene in black-figure and the other side depicts the scene in red-figure.

The Andokides Painter is credited as the inventor of red-figure style and its early production on bilingual vases. Several of his bilingual amphorae mimic some of Exekias’s most famous subjects, such as Achilles and Ajax playing dice. These similarities lead many scholars to conclude that he was Exekias’s student.

A score of vases with black figures, whose attribution is disputed by some researchers, show that the Andokides painter gradually attained greater control and virtuosity in the technique. Earlier examples appear a little stiff. Later, the artist exploits the benefits inherent in the technique and utilizes a range of colors from red to dark brown.

The Andokides painter marked the arrival of the red-figure style that was later used by many artists. The painter’s most favored subject matter was a wide range of mythological scenes that depicted the gods and heroes. Heracles was his favorite character.

Herakles and Athena: Herakles and Athena. Red-figure side of a bilingual amphora, c. 520–510 BCE, Vulci, Italy.

Herakles and Athena: Herakles and Athena. Black-figure side of a bilingual amphora, c. 520–510 BCE, Vulci, Italy.

Additional Red-Figure Painters

Additional red-figure painting can be seen in the work of the rivals Euthymides and Euphronios. Euthymides is known as a pioneer of red-figure painting.

His vessels depict people in movement and he attempted perspective by showing figures with foreshortened limbs. The Revelers Vase is an amphora that depicts three drunk men dancing. While the figures do not overlap, the bodies are in shown in profile, three-quarter view, and from behind.

Breaking the traditional rigidity of contemporary Archaic statues and paintings, the revelers are in dynamic postures. The two outer figures stand in active stances, with their legs and hands in motion. The middle figure is in a twisted position, with his back to the viewer and his head looking over his left shoulder. The use of foreshortening , although rudimentary, gives the entire composition a more natural and believable feel. It is perhaps the use of this relatively untried technique that led Euthymides to write on his vase, “As never Euphronios [could do!]” as a taunt to his contemporary and rival.

Euthymides. Revelers Vase: Red-figure amphora, c. 510 BCE.

The painter Euphronios is also recognized for his dramatic and complex compositions. He used diluted clay slip to create a range of shades to color his figures, making them appear energetic and present in three-dimensional space.

A scene of Herakles and Antaios wrestling conveys the bodies of both men with previously unseen naturalism. The men's bodies bend and twist and their limbs overlap, disappear and reappear, which helps achieve both naturalism as well as a sense of space.

Herakles and Antaios: Euphronios. Herakles Wrestling Antaios. Athenian Red-figure calyx krater. (C. 510 BCE. Cervetri, Italy.)

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Treasury of Athens at Delphi. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treasury_of_Athens_at_Delphi.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- The dispute between Herakles and Apollo-Delphi. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_dispute_between_Herakles_and_Apollo-Delphi.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-The_Temple_of_Apollo_at_Delphi.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8846608. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Heracles and the Ceryean Hind. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heracles_and_the_Ceryean_Hind.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 07Delphi Fries01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:07Delphi_Fries01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Portico. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Portico#Pronaos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Opisthodomos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Opisthodomos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Greek Mythology: The Gigantomachy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Giants_(Greek_mythology)#The_Gigantomachy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Triglyph. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Triglyph. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Metope. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Metope. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anta. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Anta_(architecture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Athenian Treasury. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_Treasury. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Siphnian Treasury. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Siphnian_Treasury. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ceryneian Hind. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceryneian_Hind. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Treasury. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Treasury. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Delphi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- panhellenic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/panhellenic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- treasury. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/treasury. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tripod. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tripod. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Temple types. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Temple_types.gif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Unknown.jpeg. **Provided by**: SMB Exhibition. **Located at**: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwiqnav0sdLLAhVFPj4KHSbYC4QQjRwIBw&url=https://simple.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Labors_of_Herakles&bvm=bv.117218890,d.cWw&psig=AFQjCNG86fmii4dmlUwOVIYN3qgDb2d-Rg&ust=1458670654607686. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Veduta di Paestum 2010. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Veduta_di_Paestum_2010.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mu00e8topa_del_temple_de_Zeus_d'Olu00edmpia_amb_representaciu00f3_del_bou_de_Creta_(Museu_Arqueolu00f2gic_d'Olu00edmpia).JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwiqnav0sdLLAhVFPj4KHSbYC4QQjRwIBw&url=https://simple.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Labors_of_Herakles&bvm=bv.117218890,d.cWw&psig=AFQjCNG86fmii4dmlUwOVIYN3qgDb2d-Rg&ust=1458670654607686. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Amazon Web Services. **Located at**: s3.amazonaws.com/figures.boundless.com/508dd9c4e4b06dd277c0ea5c/doric+and+ionic+order.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 307px-Plan_Aphaia_sanctuary-en.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plan_Aphaia_sanctuary-en.svg#/media/File:Plan_Aphaia_sanctuary-en.svg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- eece-1173-temple-of-Aphaia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greece-1173_-_Temple_of_Athena.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aegina. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/3540. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stylobate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylobate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anta (Architecture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Anta_(architecture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Votive Offering. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Votive_offering. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ospithodomos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Opisthodomos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ovolo [Echinus molding]. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ovolo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cella [Naos]. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Doric order. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Doric_order. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paestum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paestum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- megaron. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/megaron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- peripteral. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/peripteral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- entasis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/entasis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Entablature. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Entablature. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tholos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tholos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Istanbul - Museo archeologico - Mostra sul colore nell'antichitu00e0 02 - Foto G.nDall'Orto 28-5-2006. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul_-_Museo_archeologico_-_Mostra_sul_colore_nell'antichit%C3%A0_02_-_Foto_G._Dall'Orto_28-5-2006.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 015MA Kore. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:015MA_Kore.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 0006MAN-Kouros2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:0006MAN-Kouros2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Full Medusa pediment at the Archaelogical museum of Corfu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Full_Medusa_pediment_at_the_Archaelogical_museum_of_Corfu.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kouros marble statue. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kouros_marble_statue.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aphaia-W pediment.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aphaia_pediment_warrior_W-VII_Glyptothek_Munich_79.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aphaia-E pediment.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/5/5f/Aphaia_warrior_adjusted.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chiton (costume). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiton_(costume). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Peplos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Peplos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Temple of Artemis (Corfu). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Artemis_(Corfu). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_sculpture%23Archaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kore (sculpture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kore_(sculpture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Archaic smile. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaic_smile. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiton. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiton. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kore. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/kore. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- apotropaic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/apotropaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kouros. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/kouros. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- peplos. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/peplos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aegina. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/3540. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Herakles Antaios Louvre G103. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Herakles_Antaios_Louvre_G103.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Athena Herakles Staatliche Antikensammlungen 2301 A. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Athena_Herakles_Staatliche_Antikensammlungen_2301_A.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Athena Herakles Staatliche Antikensammlungen 2301 B. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Athena_Herakles_Staatliche_Antikensammlungen_2301_B.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Vaso Franu00e7ois, 01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vaso_Fran%C3%A7ois,_01.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Revelers Vase.jpg. **Provided by**: Flickr. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/47357563@N06/7953461708. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Akhilleus Aias MGEt 16757. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Akhilleus_Aias_MGEt_16757.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Red-Figure Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-figure_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bilingual Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilingual_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pottery of Ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pottery_of_ancient_Greece%23Black_figure. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Black-Figure Pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-figure_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Calydonian Boar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Calydonian_Boar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Andokides Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andokides_painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Exekias. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Exekias. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Euthymides. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthymides. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kleitias. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleitias. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Euphronios. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphronios. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Revelers Vase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Revelers_Vase. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Franu00e7ois Vase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Vase. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Burin. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/burin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Red-Figure in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/red-figure. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Slip. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/slip. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.4: The Archaic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.5: The Early Classical Period

Marble Sculpture and Architecture in the Greek Early Classical Period

Early Classical Greek marble sculptures and temple decorations display new conventions to depict the body and severe style facial expressions.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of the Kritios Boy, Spear Bearer, and the Temple of Zeus

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The sculpture found on the pediment and metopes at the Temple of Zeus at Olympia represent the style of relief and pedimental sculptural during the Early Classical period.
- The Severe style is an Early Classical style of sculpting where the body is depicted naturalistically and the face remains blank and expressionless. This style notes the artist's understanding of the body's musculature, while maintaining a screen between art and reality with the stoic face.
- Contrapposto is a weight shift depicted in the body that rotates the waist, hips, chest, shoulders, and sometimes even the neck and head of the figure. It increases that naturalism in the body since it correctly mimics the inner workings of human musculature.
- Kritios Boy is an early example of contrapposto and Severe style. This marble statue depicts a nude male youth, muscular and well built, with an air of naturalism that dissolves when examining his Severe style face.
- Polykleitos, an artist and art theorist, developed a canon for the creation of the perfect male body based on mathematical proportions. His Doryphoros (Spear Bearer) is believed to be a sculptural representation of his treatise. The figure stands in contrapposto, with a Severe-style face.

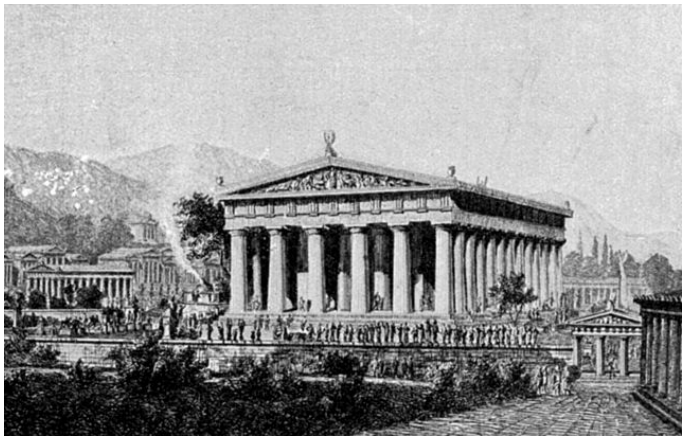
Key Terms

- **Severe style**: The dominant idiom of Greek sculpture in the period from 490 to 450 BCE. It marks the breakdown of the canonical forms of Archaic art and the transition to the greatly expanded vocabulary and expression of the classical movement of the late 5th century.
- **Perserchutt**: A German term meaning Persian debris or rubble, that refers to the location of ritually buried architectural and votive sculptures that were destroyed following the sack of Athens by the Persians. The area was first excavated by the Germans in the late 19th century.
- **hexastyle**: Describes a building with six columns in the front and back and 13 down each side.

Temple of Zeus at Olympia

The Temple of Zeus at Olympia is a colossal ruined temple in the center of the Greek capital Athens that was dedicated to Zeus, king of the Olympian gods. Its plan is similar to that of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina.

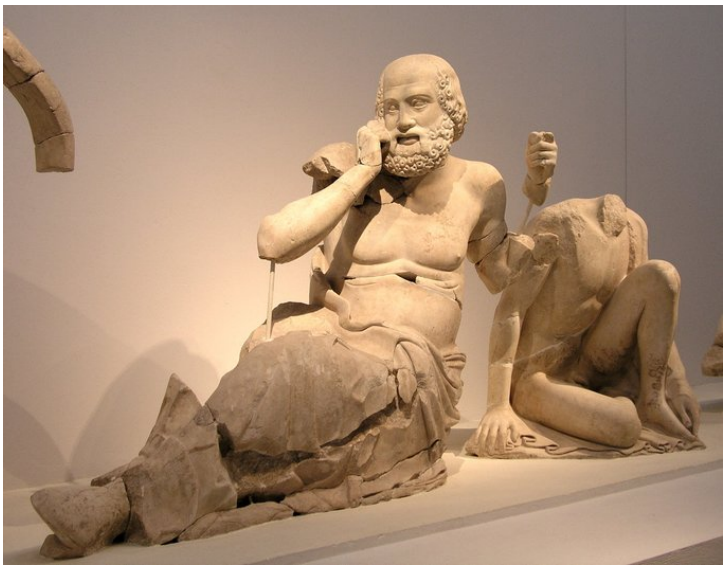
It is hexastyle , with six columns across the front and back and 13 down each side. It has two columns directly connected to the walls of the temple, known as in antis, in front of both the entranceway (pronaos) and the inner shrine (opisthodomos). Like the Temple of Aphaia, there are two, two-story colonnades of seven columns on each side of the inner sanctuary (naos).



Temple of Zeus at Olympia: Wilhelm Lübke's illustration of the Temple as it might have appeared in the fifth century BCE.

The pedimental figures are depicted in the developing Classical style with naturalistic yet overly muscular bodies. Most of the figures are shown with the expressionless faces of the Severe style.

The figures on the east pediment await the start of a chariot race, and the whole composition is still and static . A seer, however, watches it in horror as he foresees the death of Oenomaus. This level of emotion would never be present in Archaic statues and it breaks the Early Classical Severe style, allowing the viewer to sense the forbidding events about to happen.



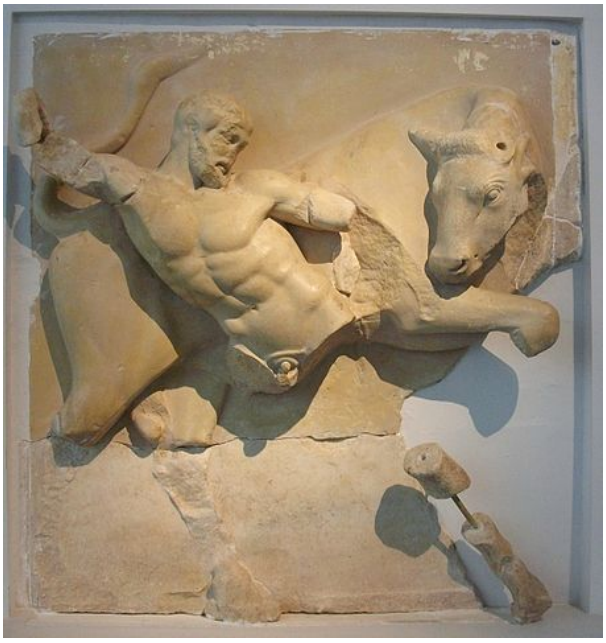
Seer from the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus, marble, c. 470–455 BCE, Olympia, Greece: The level of emotion on the seer's face would never be present in Archaic statues and it breaks the Early Classical Severe style, allowing the viewer to sense the forbidding events about to happen.

Unlike the static composition of the eastern pediment, the Centauromachy on the western pediment depicts movement that radiates out from its center. The centaurs, fighting men, and abducted women struggle and fight against each other, creating tension in another example of an early portrayal of emotion. Most figures are depicted in the Severe style. However, some, including a centaur, have facial features that reflect their wrath and anger.

Centauromachy, c. 460 BCE: West pediment, Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

The twelve metopes over the pronaos and opisthodomos depict scenes from the twelve labors of Herakles. Like the development in pedimental sculpture, the reliefs on the metopes display the Early Classical understanding of the body. Herakles' body is strong and idealized, yet it has a level of naturalism and plasticity that increases the liveliness of the reliefs.

The scenes depict varying types of compositions. Some are static with two or three figures standing rigidly, while others, such as Herakles and the Cretan Bull, convey a sense of liveliness through their diagonal composition and overlapping bodies.



Herakles and the Cretan Bull, c. 460 BCE: This metope fragment depicts Herakles in a more dynamic and emotive pose. It is from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

Athena and Herakles depicting the Stymphalian Birds, c. 460 BCE: This metope fragment depicts Herakles with relatively calm body language. From the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

Kritios Boy

A slightly smaller-than-life statue known as the Kritios Boy was dedicated to Athena by an athlete and found in the Perserchutt of the Athenian Acropolis. Its title derives from a famous artist to whom the sculpture was once attributed.

The marble statue is a prime example of the Early Classical sculptural style and demonstrates the shift away from the stiff style seen in Archaic kouroi. The torso depicts an understanding of the body and plasticity of the muscles and skin that allows the statue to come to life.

Part of this illusion is created by a stance known as contrapposto. This describes a person with his or her weight shifted onto one leg, which creates a shift in the hips, chest, and shoulders to create a stance that is more dramatic and naturalistic than a stiff, frontal pose. This contrapposto position animates the figure through the relationship of tense and relaxed limbs.

However, the face of the Kritios Boy is expressionless, which contradicts the naturalism seen in his body. This is known as the Severe style. The blank expressions allow the sculpture to appear less naturalistic, which creates a screen between the art and the viewer. This differs from the use of the Archaic smile (now gone), which was added to sculpture to increase their naturalism. However, the now empty eye sockets once held inlaid stone to give the sculpture a lifelike appearance.

Kritios Boy, marble, c. 480 BCE, Acropolis, Athens, Greece: This marble statue is a prime example of the Early Classical sculptural style and demonstrates the shift away from the style seen in Archaic kouroi.

Polykleitos

Polykleitos was a well-known Greek sculptor and art theorist during the early- to mid-fifth century BCE. He is most renowned for his treatise on the male nude, known as the Canon, which describes the ideal, aesthetic body based on mathematical proportions and Classical conventions such as contrapposto.

His Doryphoros, or Spear Bearer, is believed to be his representation of the Canon in sculpted form . The statue depicts a young, well-built soldier holding a spear in his left hand with a shield attached to his left wrist. Both military implements are now lost. The figure has a Severe-style face and a contrapposto stance. In another development away from the stiff and seemingly immobile Archaic style, the Doryphoros' left heel is raised off the ground , implying an ability to walk.

Doryphoros: Polykleitos's Doryphoros, or Spear Bearer, is believed to be his representation of the Canon in sculpted form. This is a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze original, c. 450 BCE.

This sculpture demonstrates how the use of contrapposto creates an S-shaped composition. The juxtaposition of a tension leg and tense arm and relaxed leg and relaxed arm, both across the body from each other, creates an S through the body.

The dynamic power of this composition shape places elements—in this case the figure's limbs—in opposition to each other and emphasizes the tension this creates. The statue, as a visualization of Polykletios' canon, also depicts the Greek sense of symmetria, the harmony of parts, seen here in the body's proportions.

Bronze Sculpture in the Greek Early Classical Period

Surviving Greek bronze sculptures from the Early Classical period showcase the skill of Greek artists in representing the body and expressing motion.

Learning Objectives

Discuss characteristics and examples of Greek Bronze sculpture during the Early Classical Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While bronze was a popular material for Greek sculptors, few Greek bronzes exist today. We know a majority of famous sculptors and sculptures only through marble Roman copies and the few bronzes that survived, often from shipwrecks.
- Early Classical bronzes are sculpted in the lost wax method of casting . The figures are created in the Severe style with naturalistic bodies and blank, expressionless faces. The sculptures' lightweight appearance is due to their hollowness and contributes to their implied potential energy and movement.
- The Charioteer of Delphi, the Riace Warriors, and the Artemision Bronze all display the sculpting characteristics of the Early Classical Severe style while also demonstrating the characteristics of bronze sculpting, including the lightness of the material and liveliness that could be achieved.

Key Terms

- **strut**: A support rod.
- **contrapposto**: The position of a figure whose hips and legs are twisted away from the direction of the head and shoulders.
- **lost wax**: A method of casting in which a model of the sculpture is made from wax. The model is used to make a mold. When the mold has set, the wax is made to melt and is poured away, leaving the mold ready to be used to cast the sculpture.

Greek Bronze Sculpture

Bronze was a popular sculpting material for the Greeks. Composed of a metal alloy of copper and tin, it provides a strong and lightweight material for use in the ancient world, especially in the creation of weapons and art. The Greeks used bronze throughout their history.

Because bronze is a valuable material, throughout history bronze sculptures were melted down to forge weapons and ammunition or to create new sculptures. The Greek bronzes that we have today mainly survived because of shipwrecks, which kept the material from being reused, and the sculptures have since been recovered from the sea and restored.

The Greeks used bronze as a primary means of sculpting, but much of our knowledge of Greek sculpture comes from Roman copies. The Romans were very fond of Greek art, and collecting marble replicas of them was a sign of status, wealth, and intelligence in the Roman world.

Roman copies worked in marble had a few differences from the original bronze. Struts , or supports, were added to help buttress the weight of the marble as well as the hanging limbs that did not need support when the statue was originally made in the lighter and hollow bronze. The struts appeared either as rectangular blocks that connect an arm to the torso or as tree stumps against the leg, which supports the weight of the sculpture, as in this Roman copy of the Diadoumenos Atenas.

Diadoumenos Atenas (Roman copy): The extension connecting the tree trunk to the leg of the figure is an example of a strut used in marble Roman copies of original Greek bronzes.

Lost Wax Technique

The lost wax technique, which is also known by its French name, cire perdue, is the process that ancient Greeks used to create their bronze statues. The first step of the process involves creating a full-scale clay model of the intended work of art. This would be the core of the model.

Once completed, a mold is made of the clay core and an additional wax mold is also created. The wax mold is then be placed between the clay core and the clay mold, creating a pocket, and the wax is melted out of the mold, after which the gap is filled with bronze. Once cooled, the exterior clay mold and interior clay coreis are carefully removed and the bronze statue is finished.

The multiple pieces are welded together, imperfections smoothed, and any additional elements, such as inlaid eyes and eyelashes, are then added. Because the clay mold must be broken when removing the figure, the lost wax method can be used only for making one-of-a-kind sculptures.

Charioteer of Delphi

The Charioteer of Delphi is an Early Classical bronze sculpture of a life-sized chariot driver. An inscription at the base tells us that the statues were originally dedicated by a man, named Polyzalus of Gela, to Apollo at the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi.

Polyzalus commissioned and dedicated the work in commemoration of his victorious chariot race during the Pythian Games. The Charioteer is the only remaining part of a large statue group that included the chariot, grooms, and horses.

Charioteer of Delphi: Charioteer of Delphi. Bronze. c. 475 BCE. Sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi, Greece.

While the commissioner was a tyrant of the Greek colonial city of Gela on Sicily, the statue is believed to have been made in Athens. It was made by the lost wax technique in multiple sections and then assembled.

The Charioteer stands tall, his right arm stretched out to grasp reins; his left arm is missing. He has a high waist, which probably looked more natural when he stood on his chariot. However, despite the high waist, the figure has a high degree of naturalism , on par with the marble sculptural developments of the Early Classical style. The arms, face, and feet are rendered with high plasticity, and the inlaid eyes and added copper of his lips and eyelashes all add a degree of naturalism.

When compared to Archaic sculptures, it appears very natural. However, as an Early Classical sculpture, the Charioteer has yet to achieve the full Classical style. The Archaic smile is gone, but his appears almost blank and expressionless, on par with other sculptures produced in the Severe stye of the Early Classical period.

Riace Warriors

The Riace Warriors are a set of two nude, bronze sculptures of male warriors that were recovered off the coast of Riace, Italy. They are a prime example of Early Classical sculpture and the transition between Archaic to Classical sculpting styles.

The figures are nude, unlike the Charioteer. Their bodies are idealized and appear dynamic, with freed limbs, a contrapposto shift in weight, and turned heads that imply movement. The muscles are modeled with a high degree of plasticity, which the bronze material amplifies through natural reflections of light. Additional elements, such as copper for the lips and nipples, silver teeth, and eyes inlaid with glass and bone, were added to the figures to increase their naturalism. Both figures originally held a shield and spear, which are now lost. Warrior B wears a helmet, and it appears that Warrior A once wore a wreath around his head.

Riace Warriors: Warrior A (right) and Warrior B (left). Bronze, c. 460–450 BCE, Riace, Italy.

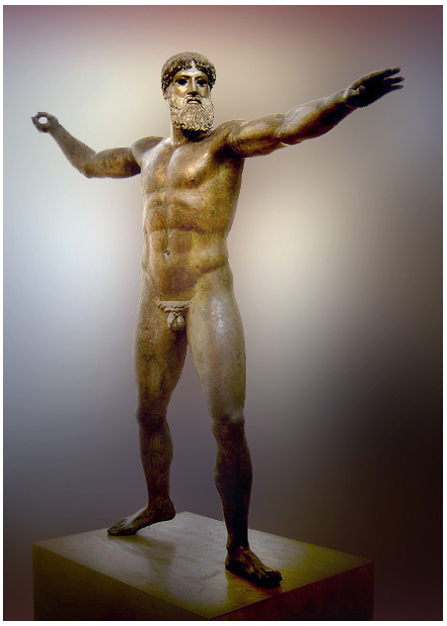
Artemision Bronze

The Artemision Bronze represents either Zeus or Poseidon. Both gods were represented with full beards to signify maturity. However, it is impossible to identify the sculpture as one god or the other because it can either be a lightning bolt (symbolic of Zeus) or a trident (symbolic of Poseidon) in his raised right hand.

The figure stands in heroic nude, as would be expected with a god, with his arms outstretched, preparing to strike. The bronze is in the Severe style with an idealized, muscular body and an expressionless face.

Like the Charioteer and the Riace Warriors, the Artemision Bronze once held inlaid glass or stone in its now-vacant eye sockets to heighten its lifelikeness. The right heel of the figure rises off the ground , which anticipates the motion the figure is about to undertake.

The full potential of the god’s motion and energy, as well as the grace of the body, is reflected in the modeling of the bronze.



Artemision Bronze: The Artemision Bronze figure depicts either Zeus or Poseidon, c. 460–450 BCE, Cape Artemision, Greece.

Ceramics in the Greek Early Classical Period

The ceramic art from Early Classical Greece displays important compositional developments and increased naturalism in the figures.

Learning Objectives

Examine the developments in ceramic art during the Early Classical period, including naturalism and white-ground painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Red-figure painting continued during the Early Classical period. The changes in the depiction of the body and in the drapery of the figures began to change, reflecting the stylistic changes and increased naturalism seen in Classical sculpture .
- The style of red-figure painting also diversified as painters began to depict figures on multiple ground lines , show characters from a variety of perspectives (including three-quarter view), and utilize more naturalism (as seen by the work of the Niobid Painter).
- White-ground painting, developed in 500 BCE, became popular during the Classical period. White-ground pottery was coated in a white slip before being fired and painted, allowing for the use of polychromy .
- Early white-ground painting (Type I) resembled black-figure painting until it was supplanted by the more familiar outline paintings. White-ground painting became the primary style for lekythoi, vessels used to hold oils that had a funerary context. Due to this context, many of the scenes painted on lekythoi depicted scenes of funerary rites and rituals , or scenes that alluded to impending death.

Key Terms

- **lekythos**: A type of ancient Greek pottery used for storing oil and previous liquids. The body is narrow and has a single handle attached to the neck of the vessel. They typically stood 10 to 20 inches tall, but when used as grave markers could be much larger.
- **polychromy**: The art or practice of combining different colors, especially brilliant ones, in an artistic way.
- **white-ground**: A style of ancient Greek vase painting in which figures appear on a white background.

Classical Period Ceramics

The Classical period witnessed the continuation of red- and black-figure painting techniques on ceramic objects. While artists continued to produce black-figure paintings into the second century BCE, the technique became increasingly rare, overtaken around 520 BCE by red-figure painting.

Attic red-figure vases were exported throughout Greece and beyond, and for a long time dominated the market for fine ceramics. Only a few centers of pottery production could compete with Athens in terms of its innovation, quality, and production capacity.

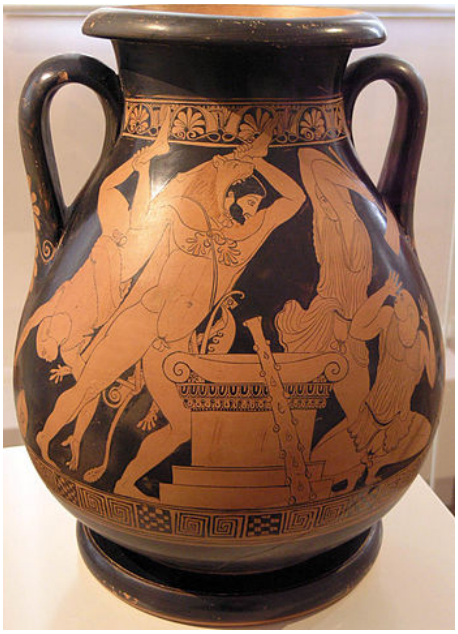
Red-Figure Painting

Red-figure painting continued to flourish during the Early, High, and Late Classical periods. The naturalism of the figures in Early Classical vase painting continued to increase, as the figures became less stocky and less linear. Both the figures and their drapery began to appear more plastic, and the scenes often depicted a single moment within a mythical story or event. Furthermore, vase painting began to be influenced by the changes occurring in both sculpture and the large-scale painting of walls and panels.

The Mannerists

The Mannerists were a group of Attic red-figure painters known for their affected (emotive) subject matter. They were active from about 480 BCE until near the end of the fifth century BCE. Their main characteristic is that they maintained features of black-figure vase painting in the red-figure technique.

Their figures seem elongated and have small heads, the garment folds fall stiff and resemble stairs, and the images are framed with black-figure style ornamentations. The range of motifs is also influenced by previous periods. The figures gesticulate as if using a form of sign language—the hands often appear stiff and theatrical. We can see typical Mannerist small heads and affected gestures in the Pan Painter's Herakles Fighting Busiris (c. 470 BCE).



Herakles Fighting Busiris: A mannerist red-figure by the Pan Painter, c. 470 BCE.

The Niobid Painter's red-figure krater of Artemis and Apollo slaying the children of Niobe, from 460 BCE, is believed to be a composition inspired by a panel painting. The side of the vessel depicting Artemis and Apollo relates to the myth of the twin god and goddess who slew Niobe's fourteen children after she boasted that her ability to birth children exceeded Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis.

This story alludes to ancient Greek admonitions against hubris, or extreme pride. The scene is one of the first vase painting scenes to show the figures on different ground lines. Apollo and Artemis stand in the center of the vessel as Niobe's children fall to ground around them. One child has even fallen behind a rock in the landscape.

On the other side of the vase is an image of gods and heroes, with Herakles at the center. All the figures stand and sit on various ground lines. The figures on both sides are depicted from multiple angles, including three-quarter view, and a profile eye is used for the figures in profile, a first in Greek vase painting.

Herakles with Gods and Heroes: Painted by the Niobid Painter. The reverse side of the krater depicts Artemis and Apollo slaying the children of Niobe. An Athenian red-figure calyx krater, c. 450 BCE, Orvieto, Italy.

Artemis and Apollo Slaying the Children of Niobe: Painted by the Niobid Painter on an Athenian red-figure calyx krater, c. 450 BCE, from Orvieto, Italy.

The Berlin Painter is another well-known Early Classical vase painter. His unique style depicts figures, isolated from context, on a small ground line against a glossy black background. His figures also start in the middle of the vase and extend onto the vessel's shoulder, stopping at the neck.

He pays particular attention to the details of the body and the drapery of each figure, and allows both figure and drapery to express emotion, space , and movement. His painting entitled Ganymede with a Hoop and Cock conveys a sense of dynamism by arranging the body through a series of diagonal outlines, using contour lines to mark the locations of muscles and tendons beneath the skin.

Ganymede with a Hoop and Cock: Painted by the Berlin Painter on an Attic red-figure bell krater, c. 500–490 BCE.

White-Ground Painting

White-ground painting developed around 500 BCE and gained popularity during the following century. The technique is based on the use of paints, instead of slip, to create polychrome vessels.

The vessels were first coated in a white slip before various colors of paint were added. The white background and firing techniques allowed for various colors to be used, including blue, yellow, red, brown, and green. Because the style is less durable than black- and red-figure painting, it was often used for votives and as grave offerings .

The common outline paintings of the white-ground technique would not dominate the style until approximately the mid-fifth century BCE. For the first 50 years of white-ground painting, known as Type I, the imagery resembled conventional black-figure painting, with the color of the background as the only difference. This depiction of Herakles fighting Geryon provides an example of Type I white-ground painting.

Herakles Fighting Geryon: Herakles (in the center) attacks Geryon (on the far right). Eurytion lays wounded at their feet. Athena (on the left) watches the scene. Attic white-ground black-figure lekythos.

White-ground painting is often seen on a lekythos , a vessel used to hold oils, which were sometimes used for anointing the dead. Due to this funerary function, lekythoi were also used as grave offerings. As such, many of the scenes painted on white-ground lekythoi depict or allude to funerary scenes (such as funerary rites and rituals) or images of warriors departing their wives for battle and death. While the scene of Herakles fighting Geryon depicts a rather violent prelude to death, the imagery on later lekythoi is somewhat more sedate.

Woman Attending a Tomb: Painted by the Thanatos Painter on an Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440–430 BCE.

The Achilles Painter, a pupil of the Berlin Painter and creator of both red-figure and white-ground vessels, is one of the most well-known white ground painters. The scenes he painted on his white-ground lekythoi are filled with pathos and sorrow, often depicting women sitting in front of grave stelae or bidding their battle-bound husbands farewell.

Muse with Lyre: Painted by the Achilles Painter on an Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440–430 BCE.

Overall, in both white-ground and red-figure painting during the Early Classical period, the form of the body was perfected by the artisans. Painted vessels were now depicting figures on a two-dimensional plane, with the illusion of three-dimensional space. These figures were rendered in that space naturally, in terms of their movement and form.

Black-figure painting nearly disappeared in the Early Classical period and was primarily reserved for objects made to seem old or to recall antique styles, such as victory amphorae for the Panhellenic Games.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- GR 08-04-23 Olympia Museum Zeustempel Ostgiebel2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GR_08-04-23_Olympia_Museum_Zeustempel_Ostgiebel2.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 623px-Centaure_i_lu00e0pita,_frontu00f3_occidental_del_temple_de_Zeus_d'Olu00edmpia,_(Museu_Arqueolu00f2gic_d'Olu00edmpia).jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19863856. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 455px-Mu00e8topa_del_temple_de_Zeus_d'Olu00edmpia_amb_representaciu00f3_del_bou_de_Creta_(Museu_Arqueolu00f2gic_d'Olu00edmpia).jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19852244%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 009MA Kritios. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:009MA_Kritios.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Olympia-ZeusTempelRestoration.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=866537. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- 436px-Metopa-templo-zeus2_crop.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15582867%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Doryphoros MAN Napoli Inv6011-2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doryphoros_MAN_Napoli_Inv6011-2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hexastyle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Portico#Hexastyle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kritios Boy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kritios_Boy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Polykleitos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Polykleitos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Contrapposto. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Contrapposto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Temple of Zeus, Olympia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Zeus,_Olympia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Doryphoros. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Doryphoros. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Severe Style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Severe%20style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Perserchutt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Perserchutt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 359px-Diadoumenos-Atenas.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2892511. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reggio calabria museo nazionale bronzi di riace. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reggio_calabria_museo_nazionale_bronzi_di_riace.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Netuno16b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Netuno16b.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Delphi charioteer front DSC06255. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delphi_charioteer_front_DSC06255.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Riace Bronzes. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Riace_bronzes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Charioteer of Delphi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Charioteer_of_Delphi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Artemision Bronze. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemision_Bronze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lost Wax Method. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_wax_method. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Strut. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/strut. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Contrapposto. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contrapposto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pittore dei niobidi, calice del louvre, 460 a.c.. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pittore_dei_niobidi,_calice_del_louvre,_460_a.c..jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 600px-Herakles_Geryon_MAR_Palermo.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4724536. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- Mousai_Helikon_Staatliche_Antikensammlungen_Schoen80_full 2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mousai_Helikon_Staatliche_Antikensammlungen_Schoen80_full.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thanatos Painter - White-Ground Lekythos - Walters 482012. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thanatos_Painter_-_White-Ground_Lekythos_-_Walters_482012.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Berlin Painter Ganymedes Louvre G175. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin_Painter_Ganymedes_Louvre_G175.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 347px-NAMA_Hu00e9raclu00e8s_&_Busiris.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=473287. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Krater Niobid Painter A Louvre G341. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Krater_Niobid_Painter_A_Louvre_G341.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerists (Greek Vase Painting). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerists_(Greek_vase_painting). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- White-Ground Technique. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/White_ground_technique. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pottery of Ancient Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pottery_of_ancient_Greece%23White_ground_technique. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Achilles Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Achilles_Painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lekythos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lekythos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Red-Figure Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-figure_painting%23Early_and_High_Classical. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Niobe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Niobe%23Examples_in_painting_and_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Niobid Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Niobid_Painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Berlin Painter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Painter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Polychromy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/polychromy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Lekythos in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/lekythos. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- White-Ground. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/White-ground. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.5: The Early Classical Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.6: The High Classical Period

Architecture in the Greek High Classical Period

High and Late Classical architecture is distinguished by its adherence to proportion, optical refinements, and its early exploration of monumentality.

Learning Objectives

Identify the departures from traditional Classical Greek architecture in the Temple of Apollo Epicurius, the Tholos of Athena Pronaia, and the Theatre at Epidauros

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architecture during the Early and High Classical periods was refined and the optical illusions corrected to create the most aesthetically pleasing proportions. The High and Late Classical periods begin to tweak these principles and experiment with monumentality and space .
- Temples during the Late Classical period began to experiment with new architectural designs and decoration. The Tholos of Athena Pronaia at Delphi is a circular shrine with two rings of columns , the outer Doric and the inner Corinthian.
- The Temple of Epicurious at Bassae is noted for its unique ground plan and the use of architectural elements from all three Classical orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The temple's use of architectural decoration and a ground plan demonstrate changing aesthetics .
- The theater in the city of Epidauros is a prime example of advanced engineering skills during this period. The theater is built with refined acoustics that could amplify the sounds on the stage to every one of the theater's 14,000 spectators.

Key Terms

- **skênê**: The structure at the back of a theatre stage.
- **aniconic**: Of, or pertaining to, representations without human or animal form.
- **tholos**: A circular structure, often a temple.

Classical Greek Architecture Overview

During the Classical period, Greek architecture underwent several significant changes. The columns became more slender, and the entablature lighter during this period.

In the mid-fifth century BCE, the Corinthian column is believed to have made its debut. Gradually, the Corinthian order became more common as the Classical period came to a close, appearing in conjunction with older orders, such as the Doric.

Additionally, architects began to examine proportion and the chromatic effects of Pentelic marble more closely. In the construction of theaters, architects perfected the effects of acoustics through the design and materials used in the seating area.

The architectural refinements perfected during the Late Classical period opened the doors of experimentation with how architecture could define space, an aspect that became the forefront of Hellenistic architecture.

Temples

Throughout the Archaic period, the Greeks experimented with building in stone and slowly developed their concept of the ideal temple. It was decided that the ideal number of columns would be determined by a formula in which twice the number of columns across the front of the temple plus one was the number of columns down each side ($2x + 1 = y$).

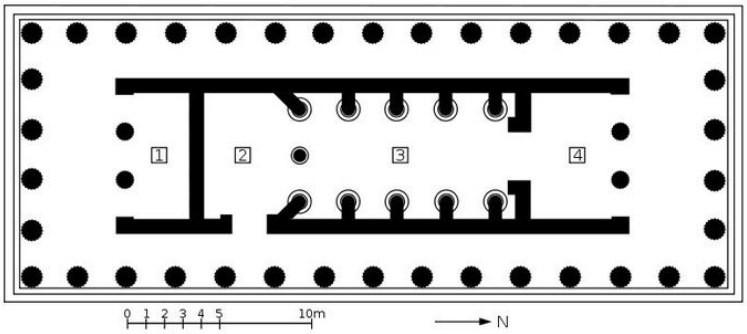
Many temples during the Classical period followed this formula for their peripteral colonnade , although not all. Furthermore, many temples in the Classical period and beyond are noted for the curvature given to the stylobate of the temple that compensated for optical distortions.

Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae

The Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae is a hexastyle temple with fifteen columns down its length. The temple was built by Iktinos, known for his work on the Parthenon, in the second half of the fifth century BCE. The temple's plan is unusual in many respects.

- The temple is aligned north to south instead of east to west, which accommodates the landscape of the site.
- The temple has a door on the naos that provides access and light to the inner chamber.
- It shares some attributes with the Parthenon, such as a colonnade in the naos. However, in this case the colonnade is a single story, and only the columns of the temple (not the stylobate) have entasis .
- The temple has elements of all three architectural orders and has the earliest known example of a Corinthian capital .

Interestingly, the temple has only one Corinthian column, located in the center of the naos. Experts hypothesize that it was placed in that location to replace the cult statue as an aniconic representation of Apollo.



Plan of the Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae : Marble. Late 5th century BCE. Bassae, Greece.

Tholos of Athena Pronaia

The Tholos of Athena Pronaia at Delphi (380–360 BCE) was built as a sanctuary by Theodoros of Phoenicia. Externally, 20 Doric columns supported a frieze with triglyphs and metopes . The circular wall of the cella was also crowned by a similar frieze, metopes, and triglyphs to a lesser extent.

Inside, a stone bench supported 10 Corinthian style pilasters , all of them attached to the concave surface of the wall. The Corinthian capital was developed in the middle of the fifth century and used minimally until the Hellenistic era; it was later popular with the Romans.

The manifold combination and blending of various architectural styles in the same building was completed through a natural polychromatic effect that resulted from the use of different materials. The materials used included thin slabs of Pentelic marble in the superstructure and limestone at the platform.

When exposed to the air, Pentelic marble acquires a tan color that sets it apart from whiter forms of marble. The building's roof was also constructed of marble and housed eight female statues carved in sharp and lively motion.

Tholos of Athena Pronaia: The Tholos of Athena Pronaia at Delphi, Greece (380–360 BCE) was built as a sanctuary by Theodoros of Phoenicia.

Theater at Epidauros

The large theater located at Epidauros provides an example of the advanced engineering at that time. The theater was designed by Polykleitos the Younger, the son of the sculptor Polykleitos, in the mid-fourth century BCE.

The theater seats up to 14,000 people. Like all Greek theaters, this theatre was built into the hillside, which supports the stadium seating, and the theater overlooks a lush valley and mountainous landscape. The original 34 rows were extended in Roman times by another 21 rows.

As is usual for Greek theatres, the view on a lush landscape behind the skênê is an integral part of the theatre itself and is not to be obscured. The theater is especially well known for its acoustics. A 2007 study indicates that the astonishing acoustic properties may be the result of its advanced design. The rows of limestone seats filter out low-frequency sounds, such as the murmur of the crowd, and amplify high-frequency sounds from the stage.

Theater at Epidauros: The large theater located at Epidauros, Greece, provides an example of the advanced engineering at that time. The theater was designed by Polykleitos the Younger.

The Acropolis

The Athenian Acropolis is an ancient citadel in Athens containing the remains of several ancient buildings, including the Parthenon.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the history and structure of the Acropolis of Athens

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Acropolis, dedicated to the goddess Athena, has played a significant role in the city from the time that the area was first inhabited during the Neolithic era. In recent centuries, its architecture has influenced the design of many public buildings in the Western hemisphere.
- Immediately following the Persian war in the mid-fifth century BCE, the Athenian general and statesman Pericles coordinated the construction of the site's most important buildings including the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Erechtheion, and the temple of Athena Nike.
- The structures on the Acropolis incorporated the Cyclopean foundations of older Mycenaean-era structures.
- In its heyday, the Parthenon featured a Doric facade and Ionic frieze interior, while the Doric Propylaea—the gateway to the Acropolis and an art gallery in the Classical era—lacked friezes and pedimental sculptures. The Ionic Erechtheion, believed to have been dedicated to the legendary King Erechtheus, features a porch supported by columnar caryatids . The Temple of Athena Nike, which celebrates Athenian war victories, was built in the Ionic order.
- The sculptures from each of these buildings depict scenes specific to their historical and mythological significance to Athens.

Key Terms

- **peripteral**: Surrounded by a single row of columns.
- **prostyle**: Free-standing columns across the front of a building.
- **entablature**: The area of a temple facade that lies horizontally atop the columns.
- **elevation**: A geometric projection of a building, or other object, on a plane perpendicular to the horizon.
- **Geometric period**: An era of abstract and stylized motifs in ancient Greek vase painting and sculpture. The period was centered in Athens and flourished from 900 to 700 BCE.
- **Pericles**: A prominent and influential Greek statesman, orator, and the general of Athens during the city's Golden Age—specifically, the time between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.
- **capital**: The topmost part of a column.

The Athenian Acropolis

The study of Classical-era architecture is dominated by the study of the construction of the Athenian Acropolis and the development of the Athenian agora . The Acropolis is an ancient citadel located on a high, rocky outcrop above and at the center of the city of Athens. It contains the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historic significance.

The word acropolis comes from the Greek words ἄ (akron, meaning edge or extremity) and π (polis, meaning city). Although there are many other acropoleis in Greece, the significance of the Acropolis of Athens is such that it is commonly known as The Acropolis without qualification.

The Acropolis at Athens: The Acropolis has played an important role in the city of Athens from the time the area was first inhabited.

The Acropolis has played a significant role in the city from the time that the area was first inhabited during the Neolithic era. While there is evidence that the hill was inhabited as far back as the fourth millennium BCE, in the High Classical Period it was Pericles (c. 495–429 BCE) who coordinated the construction of the site's most important buildings, including the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Erechtheion, and the temple of Athena Nike.

The buildings on the Acropolis were constructed in the Doric and Ionic orders, with dramatic reliefs adorning many of their pediments , friezes, and metopes .
In recent centuries, its architecture has influenced the design of many public buildings in the Western hemisphere.

Early History

Archaeological evidence shows that the acropolis was once home to a Mycenaean citadel. The citadel's Cyclopean walls defended the Acropolis for centuries, and still remains today. The Acropolis was continually inhabited, even through the Greek Dark Ages when Mycenaean civilization fell.

It is during the Geometric period that the Acropolis shifted from being the home of a king to being a sanctuary site dedicated to the goddess Athena, whom the people of Athens considered their patron . The Archaic -era Acropolis saw the first stone temple dedicated to Athena, known as the Hekatompedon (Greek for hundred-footed).

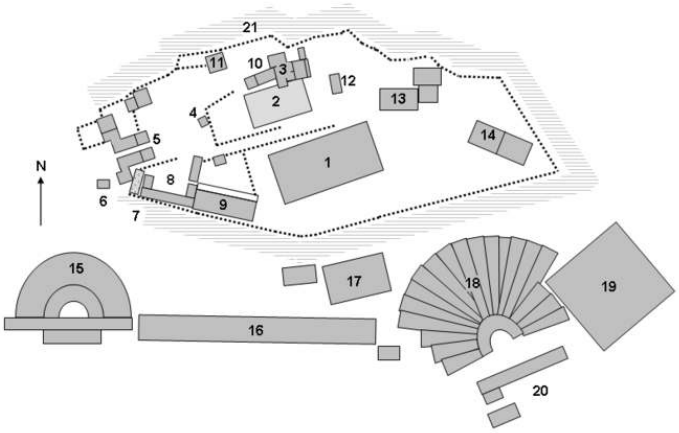
This building was built from limestone around 570 to 550 BCE and was a hundred feet long. It has the original home of the olive-wood statue of Athena Polias, known as the Palladium, that was believed to have come from Troy.

In the early fifth century the Persians invaded Greece, and the city of Athens—along with the Acropolis—was destroyed, looted, and burnt to the ground in 480 BCE. Later the Athenians, before the final battle at Plataea, swore an oath that if they won the battle—that if Athena once more protected her city—then the Athenian citizens would leave the Acropolis as it is, destroyed, as a monument to the war. The Athenians did indeed win the war, and the Acropolis was left in ruins for thirty years.

Periclean Revival

It was immediately following the Persian war that the Athenian general and statesman Pericles funded an extensive building program on the Athenian Acropolis. Despite the vow to leave the Acropolis in a state of ruin, the site was rebuilt, incorporating all the remaining old materials into the spaces of the new site.

The building program began in 447 BCE and was completed by 415 BCE. It employed the most famous architects and artists of the age and its sculpture and buildings were designed to complement and be in dialog with one another.



Plan of the Acropolis: Plan of the Acropolis and surrounding area. The buildings include: (1) Parthenon (2) Old Temple of Athena (3) Erechtheum (4) Statue of Athena Promachos (5) Propylaea (6) Temple of Athena Nike (7) Eleusinion (8) Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia or Brauroneion (9) Chalkotheke (10) Pandroseion (11) Arrephorion (12) Altar of Athena (13) Sanctuary of Zeus Polieus (14) Sanctuary of Pandion (15) Odeon of Herodes Atticus (16) Stoa of Eumenes (17) Sanctuary of Asclepius or Asclepieion (18) Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus (19) Odeon of Pericles (20) Temenos of Dionysus Eleuthereus (21) Aglaureion.

The Parthenon

The Parthenon represents a culmination of style in Greek temple architecture. The optical refinements found in the Parthenon—the slight curve given to the whole building and the ideal placement of the metopes and triglyphs over the column capitals —represent the Greek desire to achieve a perfect and harmonious design known as symmetria.

While the artist Phidias was in charge of the overall plan of the Acropolis, the architects Iktinos and Kallikrates designed and oversaw the construction of the Parthenon (447–438 BCE), the temple dedicated to Athena. The Parthenon is built completely from Pentalic marble, although parts of its foundations are limestone from a pre-480 BCE temple that was never completed.

The design of the Parthenon varies slightly from the basic temple ground plan . The temple is peripteral , and so is surrounded by a row of columns. In front of both the pronaos (porch) and opisthodomos is a single row of prostyle columns.

The opisthodomos is large, accounting for the size of the treasury of the Delian League, which Pericles moved from Delos to the Parthenon. The pronaos is so small it is almost non-existent. Inside the naos is a two-story row of columns around the interior, and set in front of the columns is the cult statue of Athena. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece.

The Parthenon: The Parthenon, designed by Iktinos and Kallikrates, is a temple on the Athenian Acropolis, Greece, dedicated to the maiden goddess Athena, the patron of Athens. Its construction began in 447 BCE when the Athenian Empire was at the height of its power.

The Parthenon's elevation has been streamlined and shows a mix of Doric and Ionic elements. The exterior Doric columns are more slender and their capitals are rigid and cone-like. The entablature also appears smaller and less weighty then earlier Doric

temples. The exterior of the temple has a Doric frieze consisting of metopes and triglyphs.

Inside the temple are Ionic columns and an Ionic frieze that wraps around the exterior of the interior building. Finally, instead of the columns, the whole building has an entasis , a slight curve to compensate for the human eye. If the building was built perfectly at right angles and with straight eyes, the human eye would see the lines as curved. In order for the Parthenon to appear straight to the eye, Iktinos and Kallikrates added curvature to the building that the eye would interpret as straight.

The sculpted reliefs on the Parthenon's metopes are both decorative and symbolic, and relate stories of the Greeks against the others. Each side depicts a different set of battles.

1. Over the entrance on the east side is a Gigantomachy , depicting the battle between the giants and the Olympian gods.
2. The west side depicts an Amazonomachy, showing a battle between the Athenians and the Amazons.
3. The north side depicts scenes of the Greek sack of Troy at the end of the Trojan War.
4. The south side depicts a Centauromachy, or a battle with centaurs. The Centauromachy depicts the mythical battle between the Greek Lapiths and the Centaurs that occurred during a Lapith wedding.

These scenes are the most preserved of the metopes and demonstrate how Phidias mastered fitting episodic narrative into square spaces.

Centauromachy: A metope from the south side of the Parthenon, of a Lapith and a centaur. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 447–438 BCE.

The interior Ionic processional frieze wraps around the exterior walls of the naos. While the frieze may depict a mythical or historical procession, many scholars believe that it depicts a Panatheniac procession.

The Panathenaic procession occurred yearly through the city, leading from the Dipylon Gate to the Acropolis and culminating in a ritual changing of the peplos worn by the ancient olive-wood statue of Athena. The processional scene begins in the southwest corner and wraps around the building in both directions before culminating in the middle of the of the west wall.

It begins with images of horsemen preparing their mounts, followed by riders and chariots, Athenian youth with sacrificial animals, elders and maidens, then the gods before culminating at the central event. The central image depicts Athenian maidens with textiles, replacing the old peplos with a new one.

Horsemen in the Processional Scene: An Ionic frieze from the interior of the Parthenon. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 447–438 BCE.

The east and west pediments depict scenes from the life of Athena and the east pediment is better preserved than the west; fortunately, both were described by ancient writers. The west pediment depicted the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens. At the center of the pediment stood Athena and Poseidon, pulling away from each to create a strongly charged, dynamic composition .

The east pediment depicted the birth of Athena. While the central image of Zeus, Athena, and Haphaestus has been lost, the surrounding gods, in various states of reaction, have survived.

Sculpture group from the east pediment of the Parthenon: While the central image of Zeus, Athena, and Haphaestus has been lost, the surrounding gods, in various states of reaction, have survived (c. 447–439 BCE).

The Propylaea

Mnesicles designed the Propylaea (437–432 BCE), the monumental gateway to the Acropolis. It funneled all traffic to the Acropolis onto one gently sloped ramp. The Propylaea created a massive screen wall that was impressive and protective as well as welcoming.

It was designed to appear symmetrical but, in reality, was not. This illusion was created by a colonnade of paired columns that wrapped around the gateway. The southern wing incorporated the original Cyclopean walls from the Mycenaean citadel. This space was truncated but served as dining area for feasting after a sacrifice .

The northern wing was much larger. It was a pinacoteca , where large panel paintings were hung for public viewing. The order of the Propylaea and its columns are Doric, and its decoration is simple—there are no reliefs in the metopes and pediment.

The Propylaea: The Propylaea as it stands today. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 437–432 BCE.

Upon entering the Acropolis from the Propylaea, visitors were greeted by a colossal bronze statue of Athena Promachos (c. 456 BCE), designed by Phidias. Accounts and a few coins minted with images of the statue allow us to conclude that the bronze statue portrayed a fearsome image of a helmeted Athena striding forward, with her shield at her side and her spear raised high, ready to strike.

The Erechtheion

The Erechtheion (421–406 BCE), designed by Mnesicles, is an ancient Greek temple on the north side of the Acropolis. Scholars believe the temple was built in honor of the legendary king Erechtheus.

It was built on the site of the Hekatompedon and over the megaron of the Mycenaean citadel. The odd design of the temple results from the site's topography and the temple's incorporation of numerous ancient sites.

The temple housed the Palladium, the ancient olive-wood statue of Athena. It was also believed to be the site of the contest between Athena and Poseidon, and so displayed an olive tree, a salt-water well, and the marks from Poseidon's trident to the faithful.

Shrines to the mythical kings of Athens, Cecrops and Erechteus—who gives the temple its name—were also found within the Erechtheion. Because of its mythic significance and its religious relics , the Erechtheion was the ending site of the Panathenaic festival, when the peplos on the olive-wood statue of Athena was annually replaced with new clothing with due pomp and ritual.

The Erechtheion: A view from the southwest. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 421–405 BCE.

A porch on the south side of the Erechtheion is known as the Porch of the Caryatids, or the Porch of the Maidens. Six, towering, sculpted women (caryatids) support the entablature. The women replace the columns, yet look columnar themselves. Their drapery, especially over their weight-bearing leg, is long and linear, creating a parallel to the fluting on an Ionic column.

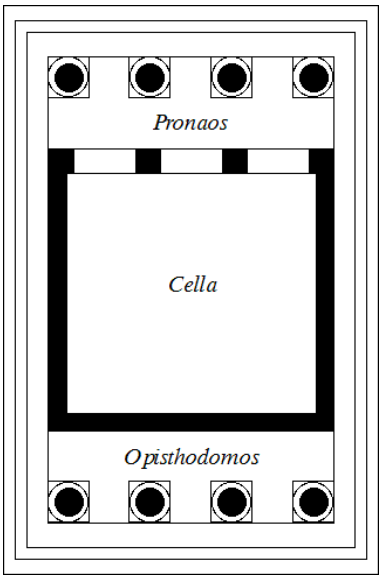
While they stand in similar poses, each statue has its own stance, facial features, hair, and drapery. They carry egg-and-dart capitals on their heads, much as women throughout history have carried baskets. Between their heads and this capital is a sculpted cushion, which gives the appearance of softening the load of the weight of the building.

The sculpted columnar form of the caryatids is named after the women of the town of Kayrai, a small town near and allied to Sparta. At one point during the Persian Wars the town betrayed Athens to the Persians. In retaliation, the Athenians sacked their city, killing the men and enslaving the women and children. Thus, the caryatids depicted on the Acropolis are symbolic representations of the full power of Athenian authority over Greece and the punishment of traitors.

The porch of the Erechtheion: The porch of the Erechtheion is held up by the caryatids. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 421–405 BCE.

The Temple of Athena Nike

The Temple of Athena Nike (427–425 BCE), designed by Kallikrates in honor of the goddess of victory, stands on the parapet of the Acropolis, to the southwest and to the right of the Propylaea. The temple is a small Ionic temple that consists of a single naos, where a cult statue stood fronted by four piers . The four piers aligned to the four Ionic prostyle columns of the pronaos. Both the pronaos and opisthodomos are very small, nearly non-existent, and are defined by their four prostyle columns.



The plan for the Temple of Athena Nike : This temple is a small Ionic temple that consists of a single naos, where a cult statue stood fronted by four piers, c. 427–425 BCE.

Temple of Athena Nike: The Temple of Athena Nike, c. 427–425 BCE. Acropolis, Athens, Greece.

The continuous frieze around the temple depicts battle scenes from Greek history. These representations include battles from the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, including a cavalry scene from the Battle at Marathon and the Greek victory over the Persians at the Battle of Plataea.

The scenes on the Temple of Athena Nike are similar to the battle scenes on the Parthenon, which represented Greek dominance over non-Greeks and foreigners in mythical allegory . The scenes depicted on the frieze of the Temple of Athena Nike frieze display Greek and Athenian dominance and military power throughout historical events.

A parapet was added on the balustrade to protect visitors from falling down the steep hillside. Images of Nike, such as Nike Adjusting Her Sandal, are carved in relief.

In this scene Nike is portrayed standing on one leg as she bends over a raised foot and knee to adjust her sandal. Her body is depicted in the new High Classical style. Unlike Archaic sculpture, this scene actually depicts Nike's body. Her body and muscles are clearly distinguished underneath her transparent yet heavy clothing.

This style, known as wet drapery , allows sculptors to depict the body of a woman while still preserving the modesty of the female figure. Although Nike's body is visible, she remains fully clothed. This style is found elsewhere on the Acropolis, such as on the caryatids and on the women in the Parthenon's pediment.

Nike Adjusting Her Sandal: This statue is in the Temple of Athena Nike, c. 425–420 BCE. It is located in the Acropolis in Athens, Greece.

Urban Planning in the Greek High Classical Period

Hippodamus of Miletus is considered the father of rational city planning, and the city of Priene is a prime example of his grid-planned cities.

Learning Objectives

Describe the role of Hipposamus of Miletus in the development of grid-planned cities in Classical Greece

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As an architect and city planner, Hippodamus of Miletus (fifth century BCE) developed an urban plan based on streets that intersect at right angles, known as the Hippodamian Plan.
- The Hippodamian Plan is based on a grid of right angles and the allocation of public and private space . The center of the city is the home of the city's most important civic public spaces, including the agora , the bouleuterion , theaters, and temples. Private rooms surround the city's public areas.
- Since the Hippodamian Plan is based on angles and measurements, it can be laid out uniformly over any kind of terrain. In the city of Priene, the plan is laid out over a sloping hillside, and the terrain is terraced to fit into the rational network of houses, streets, and public buildings.

Key Terms

- **Ionia**: An ancient Greek settlement on the west coast of Asia Minor inhabited by one of the four, main Hellenic tribes.
- **bouleuterion**: A building that housed the council of citizens in Ancient Greece; an assembly hall.
- **grid plan**: A type of city plan in which streets run at right angles to each other.

Hippodamus of Miletus

Although the idea of the grid was present in early Greek city planning, it was not pervasive prior to the fifth century BCE. Following the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, many cities were left decimated and in need of rebuilding. Before rational city planning, cities grew organically and often radiated out from a central point, such as the Acropolis and Agora at the center of Athens.

Hippodamus of Miletus on the Ionian coast (the western coast of modern Turkey) was an architect and urban planner who lived between 498 and 408 BCE. He is considered the father of urban planning, and his name is given to the grid layout of city planning, known as the Hippodamian plan.

His plans of Greek cities were characterized by order and regularity in contrast to the intricacy and confusion common to cities of that period. He is seen as the originator of the idea that a town plan might formally embody and clarify a rational social order.

The Hippodamian plan is now known as a grid plan formed by streets intersecting at right angles. Hippodamus helped rebuild many Greek cities using this plan, and the construction was exported to newly settled Greek colonies. It was later adopted by Alexander the Great for the cities he founded and was eventually used extensively by the Romans for their colonies.

The plan not only encompassed the grid pattern for the streets but also designated a standard size for city blocks and allocated public and private space. Typically the public spaces of the Greeks' agorae and theaters were located at the center of the city. Additional space would be cleared for gymnasiums and stadiums. The acropolis, the highest part of the city, was always reserved for the city's most important temples.

Priene and Miletus

The city of Priene, located near Miletus on the Ionian coast, is a prime example of the Hippodamian plan. The city is located on a hillside, and the urban plan forces structure onto the natural landscape. The city's grid-planned streets divide the sloping hillside into blocks, which are further divided into lots for private housing.

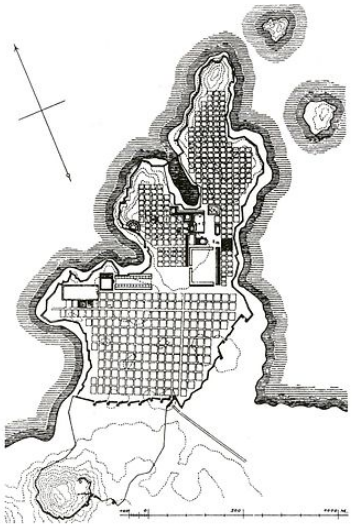
In the middle of the city were many public buildings. The agora was the central component of the city. Its colonnaded stoa bounded the public space to the north. The agora stretched the length of six city blocks and was flanked on its southern side by the Temple of Zeus.

North of the stoa was the bouleuterion, the assembly hall, and a small theatre. A Temple of Athena was located just northwest of the agora. Blocks of housing surrounded the agora. Down the slope from them on level ground were the gymnasium and stadium. Above the city, high on a hillside, was the city's acropolis.

Bouleuterion: A bouleuterion in Priene, Turkey.

The plan of Priene follows the rational grid plan established by Hippodamus and demonstrates its function, even when laid over the rocky and hilly terrain. The city's location on a hillside did not constrict its uniformity or the allocation of public and private space. Instead, the rational plan of Priene allowed for access to multiple sites of the city and easy navigation through the city.

In Hippodamus' home city of Miletus, the grid plan would become the model of urban planning followed by the Romans. What is most impressive is its wide central area, which is kept unsettled according to his macro-scale urban estimation and in time evolved to the Agora, the center of both the city and society.



Grid plan of Miletus, c. 400 BCE: In Hippodamus' home city of Miletus, the grid plan would become the model of urban planning followed by the Romans.

Stelae in the Greek High Classical Period

Large, relief-carved stelae became the new funerary markers in Greece during the High Classical period.

Learning Objectives

Describe the function of stelae in High Classical Greek sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Funerary stelae were large and rectangular. They were often topped by pediments that were often, although not always, supported by columns . Stelae were originally painted and in some cases adorned with metal props such as spears.
- The funerary stelae of Classical Greece are idealized portraits that attempt to relate the character and social position of the dead through attributes depicted on the grave marker. Examples include a warrior depicted in battle or a woman adorning herself in jewelry.
- The reliefs on funerary stelae followed the stylistic characteristics of the Classical period. The bodies of the men are well modeled and, if standing, they often stand with contrapposto . Drapery is often portrayed in the wet-drapery style , which allows for the form of the body to be shown.
- The funerary stelae of children often depict companion animals, such as doves and other birds, which might have had symbolic connections with the afterlife.

Key Terms

- **naiskos**: A small temple made in the Classical order with columns or pillars and pediment.
- **Kerameikos**: An area of Ancient Athens located northwest of the Acropolis on either side of the Dipylon Gate. The location is known as the potter's quarter.
- **stele**: A tall, slender stone monument, often with writing carved into its surface

Funerary Stelae

A stele (plural: stelae) is a large slab of stone or wood erected for commemorative and funerary purposes. The stelae of ancient Greece replaced the funerary markers of the Geometric kraters and amphorae, and the Archaic kouroi and korai of the Classical period.

The stelae were wide and tall and were Classical-style portraits. While the figures were still idealized, they were meant to represent specific individuals. Stelae were inscribed with the name of the dead and often the names of the relatives. Most stelae are rectangular and often topped with a pediment. Columns often, but not always appear on each side, seemingly to support the pediment. Stelae in this faux-architectural style assume the form of a funerary temple called a naiskos . An inscription would be located on the pediment or below the image, in which case the pediment was painted, plain, or decorated simply with geometric designs.

The figures depicted on Classical-era stelae are in the same style and manner seen in Classical sculpture and on sculptural decoration of architecture, such as a temple's pediments and frieze . Stelae as grave markers became popular around 430 BCE, coinciding with the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Each stele is unique for its attempts to individualize and characterize the attributes and personality of the dead.

Grave Stele of Hegeso

The Grave Stele of Hegeso from the Kerameikos Cemetery outside of Athens depicts a seated woman. The stele dates to 400 BCE, and the woman fits the stylistic representation of women at this time.

Hegeso sits on a chair with her feet resting on a footstool. She is elegantly dressed in long, flowing drapery. A female attendant in simple dress stands before her holding a small box, from which Hegeso chooses jewelry. The jewelry is now absent because it was only a painted detail, as opposed to carved in relief.

Both women wear transparent clothing that clings to their body to relieve their feminine form, although the clothing is more revealing on Hegeso than her servant. This style, known as wet drapery , also appears on the Temple of Athena Nike in Athens. Both figures are expressionless and emotionless.

Grave Stele of Hegeso: This stele is from the Kerameikos Cemetery outside of Athens and depicts a seated woman with her servant before her. The stele dates to 400 BCE, and the woman fits the stylistic representation of women at this time.

Grave Stele of an Athlete

The Grave Stele of an Athlete (early fourth century BCE), from the island of Delos, depicts a male athlete receiving lekythos of oil from a male youth. The athlete's body is reminiscent of Polykleitos's Doryphoros. It is athletic, and the muscles are defined through modeling instead of lines .

He stands in a contrapposto pose with a cocked head, reaching for the flask held by the young attendant. The youth's age is defined not by his well-built body (which is very similar to that of the athlete) but by his diminutive size.

Grave Stele of an Athlete: This stele show an athlete standing in a contrapposto pose with his head cocked, reaching for the flask held by the young attendant. Circa 375 BCE, from Delos, Greece.

Grave Stele of Dexileos

The Grave Stele of Dexileos (390 BCE) in the Kerameikos Cemetery of Athens is another demonstration of how stele reliefs reflect the sculpture style and motifs of the period. This stele recalls the carved relief of Athenian horsemen from the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon.

Dexileos rides astride a rearing horse, charging down an enemy. The inscription refers to his early death in a battle against the Corinthians. He probably originally held a metal spear in his raised hand. The two figures, Dexileos and the Corinthian, are dressed differently. The Corinthian's nudity signifies his difference from the civilized Athenian who is properly clothed. Dexileos's flying cape and rearing horse add drama to scene, which despite its content, is oddly expressionless due to emotionless faces of the characters.

Grave Stele of Dexileos: This marble stele recalls the carved relief of Athenian horsemen from the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon. Circa 390 BCE, from the Dipylon Cemetery in Athens, Greece.

Grave Stele of a Little Girl

While the above stelae commemorate adults, grave stelae also commemorate children. The Grave Stele of a Little Girl (450–440 BCE), which lacks a pediment and allows the deceased to assume most of the space , depicts a young child holding two doves, presumably her pets.

One bird perches in her hands, while the other seems to cuddle next to her and affectionately peck at her mouth. She bows her head toward both doves, wearing a solemn facial expression, as if bidding the animals farewell. Such images of children and companion animals are common subject matter on grave stelae of the Classical era.

The doves' ability to fly connected them to death and the afterlife. Some experts theorize that doves were believed to be able to communicate with those in the afterlife. Like the women on the Grave Stele of Hegeso, the child's clothing assumes the wet-drapery style to accentuate the contours of her body while allowing her to maintain feminine modesty.

Grave Stele of a Little Girl : This stele lacks a pediment and allows the deceased to assume most of the space. It depicts a young child holding two doves, presumably her pets. From the Island of Paros, c. 450–440 BCE.

Painting in the Greek High Classical Period

Panel and tomb paintings from the High Classical Period depict natural figures with high plasticity and dynamic compositions.

Learning Objectives

Describe the styles of painting that developed through the High Classical period as seen in panel and tomb paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Few examples of panel, fresco , and wall painting survive due to their organic materials. However, the examples that do survive from the Archaic , Classical , and Late Classical periods demonstrate the same development of the figure—from stiff, rigid images to dynamic scenes of natural figures.
- The painter Apollodorus was considered one of the most talented painters in the Classical period. He developed a technique to depict shadows and depth known to the Greeks as skiagraphia, which is similar to the Renaissance use of chiaroscuro .
- The Roman Alexander Mosaic is believed to be a copy of a large-scale Greek fresco or panel painting from the late fourth century BCE. Its remarkable detail and identifiable characteristics of Alexander the Great amidst a dynamic battle point to the skill of Greek painters at the end of the Classical era.

Key Terms

- **symposium**: A drinking party, especially one with intellectual discussion, in ancient Greece.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

Classical Greece was a 200-year period in Greek culture that lasted from the fifth through fourth centuries BCE. This Classical period, following the Archaic period and succeeded by the Hellenistic period, had a powerful influence on the Roman Empire and greatly influenced the foundations of the Western Civilization . Much of modern Western politics and artistic thought, such as architecture, scientific thought, literature, and philosophy, derives from this period of Greek history.

Panel Painting

Panel painting is the painting on flat panels of wood, either a large single piece or several joined together. Because of their organic nature many panel paintings no longer exist. Panel paintings were usually done in encaustic or tempera and were displayed in the interior of public buildings, such as in the pinacoteca of the Propylaea of the Athenian Acropolis.

The earliest known panel paintings are the Pitsa Panels that date to the Archaic period between 540 and 530 BCE; however, panel painting continued throughout the Classical Period.

The painter Apollodorus was considered by the Greeks and Romans to be one of the best painters of the Early Classical period, although none of his work survived. He is credited for the use of creating shadows by a technique known as skiagraphia. The technique layers crosshatching and contour liners to add perspective to the scene and is similar to the Renaissance technique of chiaroscuro.

Pitsa Panels: These are the earliest known panel paintings, and date to the Archaic period between 540 and 530 BCE.

Tomb Painting

Tomb painting was another popular method of painting, which due to its fragile nature has often not survived. However, a few examples do remain, including the 480 BCE Tomb of the Diver and the wall paintings from the royal Macedonian tombs in Vergina that date to the mid-fourth century BCE. A comparison between the paintings demonstrate how painting followed sculptural development in regards to the rendering of the human body.

The Tomb of the Diver is from a small necropolis in Paestum, Italy, which was then the Greek colony of Poseidonia, and dates from the beginning of the Classical period. The tomb depicts a symposium scene on its walls and an image of diver on the inside of the covering slab.

The images are painted in true fresco with a limestone mortar. The scene of the diver is simple image with a small landscape of trees, water, and the diver's platform. The diver is nude and his body is simply defined through the use of line and color. The bodies of the men at the symposium more accurately demonstrate an Archaic reliance on line to model the form of the body and the draping of their clothing.

Tomb of the Diver: This is the symposium-scene fresco painted on the Tomb of the Diver.

Compared to the wall paintings from the tombs at Vergina, the Early Classical tomb painting is static and rather Archaic. The frescos from Vergina depict figures in a full-painted version of the High Classical style .

For example, there is an image believed to depict King Philip II on a chariot pulled by two horses. The fresco is poorly preserved but one is able to see on Philip's horse the modeling of the animals produced by the color shading and a suggestion of perspective when looking at the chariot. The artist relies on the shades and hues of his paints to create depth and a life-like feeling in the painting.

Man on a Chariot: The frescos from Vergina depict figures in a full-painted version of the High Classical style.

One of the quintessential wall paintings at Vergina is Hades Abducting Persephone. The painted scene appears similar to the Late Classical sculptural style and the dynamic, emotion-filled composition seems to predict the style of Hellenistic sculpture.

The scene depicts Hades on his chariot, grasping on to Persephone's nude torso as the pair ride away. The colors are faded and faint, but the bright red drapery worn by Persephone is still easily identifiable. Lines and shading emphasize its folds.

The style appears almost impressionistic, especially when examining Persephone's face and hair. Persephone and Hades create a tension filled chiastic composition, as Hades races to the left, against the pull of Persephone's outward, desperate reach to the right.

Hades Abducting Persephone. : One of the quintessential wall paintings at Vergina is a scene of Hades abducting Persephone.

Alexander the Great

Alexander III of Macedonia (356–323 BCE), better known as Alexander the Great, very carefully controlled and crafted his portraiture. In order to maintain control and stability in his empire, he had to ensure that his people recognized him and his authority.

Because of this, Alexander's portrait was set when he was very young, most likely in his teens, and it never varied throughout his life. To further control his portrait types, Alexander hired artists in different media such as painting, sculpture, and gem cutting to design and promote the portrait style of the medium. In this way, Alexander used art and artisans for their propagandistic value to support and provide a face and legitimacy to his rule.

Alexander Mosaic

The Alexander Mosaic is a Roman floor mosaic from approximately 100 BCE that was excavated from the House of the Faun in Pompeii. The mosaic depicts the Battle of Issus that occurred between the troops of Alexander the Great and King Darius III of Persia. The mosaic is believed to be a copy of a large-scale panel painting by Aristides of Thebes, or a fresco by the Philoxenos of Eretria from the late fourth century BCE.

Alexander Mosaic (Battle of Issus): This is believed to be a copy of a fresco by Philoxenos of Eretria or a panel painting by Aristides of Thebes (late fourth century BCE). Alexander is depicted in profile at the far left. This is a Roman piece, from the House of the Faun in Pompeii during the late second or third century BCE.

The mosaic is remarkable. It depicts a keen sense of detail, dramatically unfolds the drama of the battle, and demonstrates the use of perspective and foreshortening . The two main characters of the battle are easily distinguishable and this portrait of Alexander may be one of his most recognizable. He wears a breastplate and an aegis , and his hair is characteristically tousled. He rides into battle on his horse, Bucephalo, leading his troops. Alexander's gaze remains focused on Darius and he appears calm and in control, despite the hectic battle happening around him.

Darius III, on the other hand, commands the battle in desperation from his chariot, as his charioteer removes them from battle. His horses flee under the whip of the charioteer and Darius leans outward, stretching out a hand having just thrown a spear. His body position contradicts the motion of his chariot, creating tension between himself and his flight.

Other details in the mosaic include the expressions of the soldiers and the horses, such as a collapsed horse and his rider in the center of the battle, to a terrified fallen Persian, whose expression is reflected on his shield.

The shading and play of light in the mosaic, reflects the use of light and shadow in the original painting to create a realistic, three-dimensional space . Horses and soldiers are shown in multiple perspectives from profile, to three quarter, to frontal, and one horse even faces the audience with his rump. The careful shading within the mosaic tesserae models the characters to give the figures mass and volume .

Sculpture in the Greek High Classical Period

High Classical sculpture demonstrates the shifting style in Greek sculptural work as figures became more dynamic and less static.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the styles of Polykleitos, Phidias, and Myron during the High Classical period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- After mastering the portrayal of naturalistic bodies from stone, Greek sculptors began to experiment with new poses that expanded the repertoire of Greek art. The sculptures of this later period are moving away from the Classical characteristics they still maintain: idealism and the Severe style .
- Polykleitos is most well known for his Canon, depicted in the Doryphoros, but is also known for his Diadumenos and Discophoros. These two, sculpted athletes are also done in accordance to his canon and are depicted in contrapposto with chiastic poses.
- Phidias was one of the most renowned sculptors his time. He oversaw the sculptural program for the Athenian Acropolis and is also known for his giant chryselephantine cult statues of Zeus and Athena Parthenos.

- Myron is a bronze sculptor of the High Classical period. His statues are known for being imbued with potential energy. His Discobolos is poised to spring, preparing to throw a discus. While still idealized, the figure appears to be frozen in an action of intense movement.

Key Terms

- **chryselephantine**: Made of gold and ivory.
- **aegis**: An attribute of Zeus or Athena, usually represented as a goatskin shield.

Polykleitos

Polykleitos was a famous Greek sculptor who worked in bronze. He was also an art theorist who developed a canon of proportion (called the Canon) that is demonstrated in his statue of Doryphoros (Spear Bearer) Many of Polykleitos's bronze statues from the Classical period, including the Doryphoros, survive only as Roman copies executed in marble. Polykleitos, along with Phidias, is thought to have created the style recognized as Classical Greek sculpture.

Another example of the Canon at work is seen in Polykleitos's statue of Diadumenos, a youth trying on a headband, and his statue Discophoros, a discus bearer. Both Roman marble copies depict athletic, nude, male figures.

The bodies of the two figures are idealized. The nudity allows the harmony of parts, or symmetria, to easily be seen and illustrates the principles discussed in the Canon. The Canon focused on the proportion of parts of the body in relationship to each other to create the ideal male form . Both statues demonstrate fine proportion, ideal balance, and the definable parts of the body.

Discophoros: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Polykleitos, c. 440 BCE.

Diadoumenos: This is a Roman marble copy of Greek bronze original by Polykleitos, circa 430 BCE.

The athletes are shown in contrapposto stances. The Discophoros shifts his weight to his left leg. His hips and the slightly forward lean toward his right leg exaggerate the weight shift. The figure is balanced on his left leg, which is drawn back, and the rest of his body appropriately responds to this stance.

The Diadumenos also stands in contrapposto, although his movement seems more forward and stable than that of the Discophoros. He ties on a band that identifies him as a winner in an athletic contest. His raised arms add a new dynamic component to the composition .

The Discophoros and Diadumenos, along with the Doryphoros, demonstrate the flexibility of composition based on the Canon and the innate liveliness produced by contrapposto postures. Despite the lively aspects and unique poses of the figures, all three still retain the Severe style and expressionless face of early Greek sculpture.

Polykleitos not only worked in bronze but is also known for his chryselephantine cult statue of Hera at Argos, which in ancient times was compared to Phidias' colossal chryselephantine cult statues.

Phidias

Phidias was the sculptor and artistic director of the Athenian Acropolis and oversaw the sculptural program of all the Acropolis' buildings. He was considered one of the greatest sculptors of his time and he created monumental cult statues of gold and ivory for city-states across Greece.

Phidias is well known for the Athena Parthenos, the colossal cult statue in the naos of the Parthenon. While the statue has been lost, written accounts and reproductions (miniatures and representations on coins and gems) provide us with an idea of how the sculpture appeared.

It was made out of ivory, silver, and gold and had a wooden core support. Athena stood crowned, wearing her helmet and aegis . Her shield stood upright at her left side and her left hand rested on it while in her right hand she held a statue of Nike. An artist's reconstruction is housed in the Parthenon in Nashville.

Reconstruction of Phidias's Athena Parthenos: This is housed in the Parthenon in Centennial Park, Nashville, TN.

Before he created the statue of Athena Parthenos for Athens, Phidias was best known for his chryselephantine statue of Zeus at Olympia, which was considered one of the wonders of the world. The statue of Zeus at Olympia is said to have been 39 feet tall chryselephantine statue.

As with Athena Parthenos, not much is known for sure about how the statue looked, although written accounts and marble and coinage copies provide possible ideas. Besides being built on a colossal scale, reports indicate that the figure of Zeus was seated and held a scepter and a statue of Nike. An eagle was perched either at his side or on his scepter.

Besides being decorated with gold and ivory, the sculpture was further embellished with ebony and previous stones. An artist's conception of the colossal sculpture resides in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Reconstruction of Phidias's Zeus at Olympia: An artist's conception of the colossal sculpture resides in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.ia.

Myron

The Athenian artist Myron also produced bronze sculptures during the mid-fifth century BCE. His most famous work is of the Diskobolos, or discus thrower (not to be confused with Polykletios' discus bearer, Discophoros). The Diskobolos shows a young, athletic male nude with a Severe-style face. His body holds a contrapposto pose; one leg bears his weight, while the other is relaxed. A relaxed arm balances his body and the other arm tenses, preparing to let go of the disc. The Diskobols demonstrates a dynamic, chiastic composition that relies on diagonal lines to move the eye about the sculpture.

Diskobols: This is a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze original by Myron, c. 450 BCE.

This figure represents another new element in Classical sculpture—the illustration of the potential for energy. His energy appears wound up, waiting for the figure to release it. The statue depicts a swift and transitory moment and that is frozen at a precise moment to exhibit the harmony, balance, and rhythm perfected by both the athlete and the artist.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- File:Bassai Temple of Apollo Plan.svg - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Bassai_Temple_of_Apollo_Plan.svg&page=1. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Epidaure theatre paysage 2009. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Epidaure_theatre_paysage_2009.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tholos Athena Pronaia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tholos_Athena_Pronaia.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tholos of Delphi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tholos_of_Delphi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Bassae. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bassae. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Epidaurus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Epidaurus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Delphi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi%23Tholos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aniconic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aniconic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tholos. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tholos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Erechtheion.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AteneEretteoDaSW.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- temple-of-athena-nike.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Temple_of_Athena_Nike.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- temple-of-athena-nike-plan.gif. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Temple-of-Athena-Nike-Plan.gif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- erechtheum-porch.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: tinyurl.com/jzpgn33. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- acma-973-nike-sandale-1.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Athena_Nike#/media/File:ACMA_973_Nik%C3%A8_sandale_1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- elgin-marbles-frieze.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elgin_marbles_frieze.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Acropolis 2 (pixinn.net). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Acropolis_2_(pixinn.net).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- propylaea-06.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Propylaea_06.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- uth-metope-27-parthenon-bm.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_metope_27_Parthenon_BM.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- AcropolisatathensSitePlan. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AcropolisatathensSitePlan.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- px-the-parthenon-in-athens.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Parthenon_in_Athens.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Elgin_Marbles_east_pediment.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=439402. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elgin Marbles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elgin_Marbles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hekatompedon Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hekatompedon_temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Propylaea and the Erechtheion. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/5714. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Temple of Athena Nike. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/5328. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Parthenon. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/3534. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palladium (mythology). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palladium_(mythology). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Athena Polias. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena_Polias. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Acropolis of Athens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Acropolis_of_Athens. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pericles. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Pericles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Geometric Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/geometric%20period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 374px-Miletos_stadsplan_400.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8277556. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Priene Bouleuterion 2009 04 28. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Priene_Bouleuterion_2009_04_28.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Miletus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Miletus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grid Plan. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/grid_plan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hippodamus of Miletus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippodamus_of_Miletus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Urban Planning. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_planning#History. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Priene. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Priene. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hippodamus of Miletus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippodamus_of_Miletus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bouleuterion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/bouleuterion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ionia. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Ionia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stele youth BM 625. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stele_youth_BM_625.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dexileos. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dexileos.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- NAMA Stu00e8le d'Hu00e8gu00e8su00f4. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NAMA_St%C3%A8le_d'H%C3%A8g%C3%A8s%C3%B4.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 4427437652_4babd4dc28_z.jpg. **Provided by**: Flickr. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/italintheheart/4427437652. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Naiskos. **Provided by**: WIkipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Naiskos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tweeting from the Getty Villa...and Cooing, Hooting, and Squawking. **Provided by**: The Iris: Behind the Scenes at the Getty. **Located at**: http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/tweeting-from-the-getty-villa/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grave Stele of Hegeso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Grave_Stele_of_Hegeso. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grave Stele of a Little Girl. **Provided by**: Flickr. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/italintheheart/4427437652. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Stele. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stele. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kerameikos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerameikos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Greekreligion-animalsacrifice-corinth-6C-BCE. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Greekreligion-animalsacrifice-corinth-6C-BCE.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vergina royal tomb - fresco. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vergina_royal_tomb_-_fresco.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paestum tombeau plongeur c1. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paestum_tombeau_plongeur_c1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Painting vergina. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Painting_vergina.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- issus-alexander.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Issus_-_Alexander.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pitsa Panels. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitsa_panels. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apollodorus (Painter). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollodorus_(painter). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mosaic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Alexander the Great. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paintings, Macedonian Court Art, and the Alexander Mosaic. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/11064. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_art%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vergina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vergina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tomb of the Diver. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_the_Diver. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Classical Greece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Greece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Symposium. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/symposium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Discophoros BM. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Discophoros_BM.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- athena-parthenos-lequire.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15363521. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Met, roman, fragments of a marblke statue of diadoumenos, flavian period, 69-96 ca.. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Met,_roman,_fragments_of_a_marblke_statue_of_diadoumenos,_flavian_period,_69-96_ca..JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zeus_Hermitage_St._Petersburg_20021009.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=495992. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Discobolus Lancelotti Massimo. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Discobolus_Lancelotti_Massimo.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_art%23Monumental_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Parthenon. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/3534. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Statue of Zeus at Olympia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Zeus_at_Olympia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Discobolus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Discobolus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Diadumenos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Diadumenos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Myron. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Myron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Phidias. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Phidias. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chryselephantine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chryselephantine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Polykleitos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Polykleitos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.6: The High Classical Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

6.7: The Hellenistic Period

Architecture in the Hellenistic Period

Architecture during the Hellenistic period focused on theatricality and drama; the period also saw an increased popularity of the Corinthian order.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Hellenistic architecture, including stoas, the Corinthian order, and the use of theatricality

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hellenistic architecture, in a manner similar to Hellenistic sculpture, focuses on theatricality, drama, and the experience of the viewer . Public spaces and temples were created with the people in mind, and so were built on a new, monumental scale.
- Stoas are colonnaded porticos used to define public space and protect patrons from the elements. Stoas are often found around a city's agora , and turn the city's central place for civic, administrative, and market elements into a grand space.
- The Temple of Apollo at Didyma was an oracle site with an ambitious building plan that was never completed. Its plan consisted of a double colonnade of massively tall columns that engulfed the viewer in dark corridors before opening into a bright courtyard and the shrine to the god.
- The Corinthian order, developed during the Classical period, witnessed increased popularity during the Hellenistic period. The columnar style of the order is similar in many ways to the Ionic order except for the column's capital , which is vegetal and lush. A double layer of acanthus leaves line the basket from which stylized tendrils and volutes emerge.

Key Terms

- **abacus**: A flat slab that forms the uppermost member or division of the capital of a column.
- **volute**: The spiral curve on an Ionic capital.
- **acanthus**: An ornament that resembles the foliage or leaves of Acanthus spinosus that is used in the capitals of the Corinthian and composite orders.
- **orthogonal**: In linear perspective drawing, the diagonal line pointing to the vanishing point; sometimes referred to as vanishing or convergence line.
- **stoa**: In Ancient Greece, a walkway with a roof supported by colonnades, often with a wall on one side; a portico.
- **dipteral**: Having a double row of columns on each flank, as well as in the front and rear; often said of a temple.
- **colonnade**: A series of columns at regular intervals.

Architecture in the Greek world during the Hellenistic period developed theatrical tendencies, as had Hellenistic sculpture. The conquests of Alexander the Great caused power to shift from the city-states of Greece to the ruling dynasties . Dynastic families patronized large complexes and dramatic urban plans within their cities. These urban plans often focused on the natural setting, and were intended to enhance views and create dramatic civic, judicial, and market spaces that differed from the orthogonal plans of the houses that surrounded them.

Architecture in the Hellenistic period is most commonly associated with the growing popularity of the Corinthian order. However, the Doric and Ionic orders underwent notable changes. Examples include the slender and unfluted Doric columns and the four-fronted capitals on Ionic columns, the latter of which helped to solve design problems concerning symmetry on the temple porticos.

Stoa

A stoa, or a covered walkway or portico, was used to bind agorae and other public spaces. Highlighting the edge of open areas with such decorative architecture created a theatrical effect for the public space and also provided citizens with a basic daily form of protection from the elements. Both the stoa and the agora were used by merchants, artists, religious festivals, judicial courts, and civic administrations.

The Stoa of Attalos (c. 150 BCE) in Athens was built in the Agora, under the patronage of King Attalos II of Pergamon. This portico consists of a double colonnade. It was two stories tall, and had a row of rooms on the ground floor. The exterior colonnade on the ground level was built in the Doric order, and the interior was Ionic. On the second level, Ionic columns lined the exterior, and columns with a simple, stylized capital lined the interior.

The restored Stoa of Attalos: This is a view of the ground-level marble colonnades in the Agora in Athens, Greece.

Temple of Apollo at Didyma

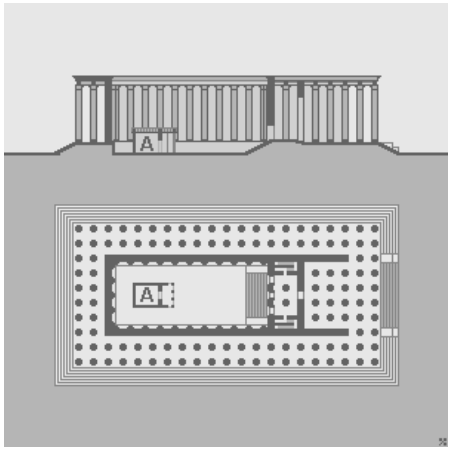
Other examples of grand and monumental architecture can be found in Ionia , modern day Turkey in Pergamon, and Didyma. The Temple of Apollo at Didyma was both a temple and an oracle site.

Temple of Apollo: Begun around 313 BCE, this was both a temple and an oracle site in Didyma, Turkey.

The temple was designed by the architects Paionios of Ephesus and Daphnis of Miletus. Its construction began in 313 BCE but was never completed, although work continued until the second century CE. This temple's site is vast.

The interior court was 71 feet wide by 175 feet long and contained a small shrine. The court was also dipteral in form, edged with a double row of 108 columns, each 65 feet tall, that surrounded the temple. The structure creates a series of imposing spaces, from the exterior colonnade to the oracle rooms, and the interior courtyard inside of which the shrine to Apollo stood.

The building plan also played with theatricality and drama, forcing its visitors through a dark interior and then opening up into a bright and open courtyard that did not have a roof. The building is dramatically different from the perfected Classical plan of temples. Instead of focusing on symmetry and harmony, the building focuses on the experience of the viewer.



Plan and elevation of the Temple of Apollo: Construction began c. 313 BCE, in Didyma, Turkey. The building plan also played with theatricality and drama, forcing its visitors through a dark interior and then opening up into a bright and open courtyard that did not have a roof.

Corinthian Order

The Corinthian order is considered the third order of Classical architecture. The order's columns are slender and fluted and sit atop a base . The capital consists of a double layer of acanthus leaves and stylized plant tendrils that curl up towards the abacus in the shape of a scroll or volute.

The decorative Corinthian order was not widely adopted in Greece, although it was popular in tholoi. It was, however, used substantially throughout the Roman period.

Corinthian capital: A corinthian capital at the Odeon of Agrippa, c. 14 BCE, in the Agora inAthens, Greece.

The ruined Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens (also known as the Olympieion) contains one of the best-known examples of the Corinthian column in Hellenistic architecture. Originally designed in the Doric order in the sixth century BCE, the temple was redesigned in the second century BCE in the Corinthian order on a colossal platform measuring 134.5 feet by 353.5 feet.

It was to be flanked by a double colonnade of eight columns across the front and back and twenty-one on the flanks, surrounding the cella . The design was eventually changed to have three rows of eight columns across the front and back of the temple and a double row of twenty on the flanks, for a total of 104 columns. The columns stand 55.5 feet high and 6.5 feet in diameter. In 164 BCE, the death of Antiochus IV (who had presented himself as the earthly embodiment of Zeus) brought the project to a halt, and the temple would remain incomplete.

Temple of Olympian Zeus: Note the corinthian colonnades and Pentelic marble.

Pergamon

Pergamon rose as a power under the Attalids and provides examples of the drama and theatrics found in Hellenistic art and architecture.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate the dramatic and theatrical nature of the Pergamon, as seen in the Altar of Zeus, the Gigantomachy, and the Dying Gauls

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Pergamon was the capital city of the Kingdom of Pergamon, which was ruled by the Attalids in the centuries following the death of Alexander the Great .
- The Acropolis of Pergamon is famous for its monumental architecture. Most of the buildings command a great view of the surrounding countryside and together create a dramatic public space .
- The Altar of Zeus at Pergamon was a monumental u-shaped Ionic building that stood on a high platform and was accessed by a wide set of stairs. Besides its dramatic architecture, the altar is known for its Gigantomachy frieze and sculptures of defeated Gauls .
- The Gigantomachy frieze represents the full blossoming of Hellenistic sculpture. The figures are dramatic, and the scenes are full of tension. They are carved in high relief with deep drilling that allows for a play of light and shadows that increases the naturalism of the figures.
- The statue group of the Dying Gauls depicts a defeated trumpeter and a Gallic chief killing himself and his wife. The figures, while enemies of Pergamon, are depicted with incredible pathos and heroics to demonstrate their worthiness as adversaries and empower the Attalid victors.

Key Terms

- **chiastic**: Referring to a figure that repeats concepts in reverse order, in the same or modified form.
- **Gaul**: An ancient person from the region that roughly corresponds to modern France and Belgium.
- **torc**: A large, rigid—or at least stiff—neck ring in metal, made either as a single piece or from strands twisted together.

The ancient city of Pergamon, now modern day Bergama in Turkey, was the capital of the Kingdom of Pergamon following the death of Alexander the Great and was ruled under the Attalid dynasty . The Acropolis of Pergamon is a prime example of Hellenistic architecture and the convergence of nature and architectural design to create dramatic and theatrical sites.

The acropolis was built into and on top a steep hill that commands great views of the surrounding countryside. Both the upper and lower portions of the acropolis were home to many important structures of urban life, including gymnasiums, agorae, baths, libraries, a theater, shrines, temples, and altars.

Scale model of Pergamon as it might have looked in antiquity: Center left: Theatre of Pergamon. Center right: Altar of Zeus. Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

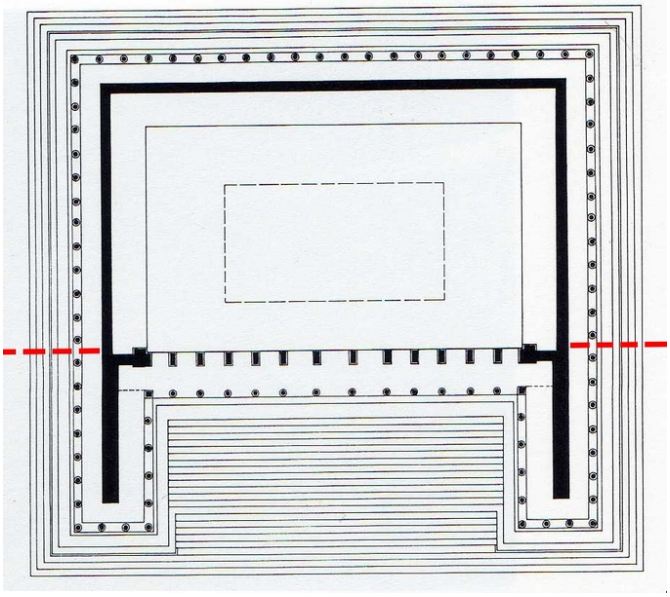
The theater at Pergamon could seat 10,000 people and was one of the steepest theaters in the ancient world. Like all Hellenic theaters, it was built into the hillside, which supported the structure and provided stadium seating that would have overlooked the ancient city and its surrounding countryside. The theater is one example of the creation and use of dramatic and theatrical architecture.

Theater of Pergamon: The theater at Pergamon could seat 10,000 people and was one of the steepest theaters in the ancient world.

Altar of Zeus

Another element found at Pergamon is the great Altar of Zeus (now housed in Germany). The altar was commissioned in the first half of the second century BCE during the reign of King Eumenes II to commemorate his victory over the Gauls, who were migrating into Asia Minor.

The altar is a U-shaped Ionic building built on a high platform with central steps leading to the top. It faced east, was located near the theater of Pergamon, and commanded an outstanding view of the region. The altar is known for its grand design and for its frieze depicting the Gigantomachy—it wraps 370 feet around the base of the altar.



Plan of the Altar of Zeus: The altar is a U-shaped Ionic building built on a high platform with central steps leading to the top, c. 175 BCE, in Bergama, Turkey.

Altar of Zeus: Originally from Bergama, Turkey, the altar is now in Berlin, Germany.

The Gigantomachy

The Gigantomachy depicts the Olympian gods fighting against their predecessors the Giants (Titans), the children of the goddess Gaia. The frieze is known for its incredibly high relief, in which the figures are barely restrained by the wall, and for its deep drilling of lines with details to create dramatic shadows.

The high relief and deep drilling of the figures also increases the liveliness and naturalism of the scene. The figures are rendered with high plasticity. The texture of their skin, drapery, and scales add another level of naturalism. Furthermore, as the frieze follows the stairs, the limbs of the figures begin to spill out of their frame and onto the stairs, physically breaking into the space of the viewer . The style and high drama of the scenes is often referred to as the Hellenistic Baroque for its exaggerated motion, emphasis on details, and the liveliness of the characters.

Nereus, Doris, a Giant, and Oceanus: Located on the north frieze of the Altar of Zeus, Bergama, Turkey, e. c. 175 BCE. The high relief and deep drilling of the figures also increases the liveliness and naturalism of the scene.

The most famous scene on the frieze depicts Athena fighting the giant Alkyoneus. She grabs his head and pulls it back while Gaia emerges from the ground to plead for her son's life and a winged Nike reaches over to crown Athena.

Athena's drapery swirls around her with deep folds and her whole body is nearly removed from the frieze. The figures are depicted with the heightened emotion commonly found on Hellenistic statues. Alkyoneus's face strains in pain and Gaia's eyes, which are all that remain of her face, are full of terror and sorrow at the death of her son.

The entire composition is depicted in a chiastic shape. Athena stretches out to grasps Alkoyneus's head, the two figures pull at each other in opposite directions. Meanwhile, the figure of Nike moves diagonally towards Athena, showing their convergence in a moment of victory. The diagonal line created by Gaia mimics the shape of her son, connecting the two figures through line and pathos. The scene is filled with the tension and emotion that are key features in Hellenistic sculpture.

Athena and Alkyoneos: Located on the east frieze of the Altar of Zeus, Bargama, Turkey, c. 175 BCE. The entire composition is depicted in a chiastic shape, and the scene is filled with the tension and emotion that are key features in Hellenistic sculpture.

The Dying Gauls

A group of statues depicting dying Gauls, the defeated enemies of the Attalids, were situated inside the Altar of Zeus. The original set of statues is believed to have been cast in bronze by the court sculptor Epigonus in 230–220 BCE. Now only marble Roman copies of the figures remain.

Like the figures on the frieze and other Hellenistic sculptures, the figures are depicted with lifelike details and a high level of naturalism. They are also depicted in the common motif of barbarians. The men are nude and wear Celtic torcs . Their hair is shaggy and disheveled. The figures are positioned in dramatic compositions and are shown dying heroically, which turns them into worthy adversaries, increasing the perception of power of the Attalid dynasty. All three figures in the group are depicted in a Hellenistic manner. To fully appreciate the statues, it is best to walk around them. Their pain, nobility, and death are evident from all angles.

One Gaul is depicted lying down, supporting himself over his shield and a discarded trumpet. He furrows his brow as he looks downward at his bleeding chest wound as he prepares himself for death. His muscles are large and strong, signifying his strength as a warrior and implying the strength of the one who struck him down.

Dying Gaul: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Epigonos, c. 230–220 BCE, in Pergamon, Turkey.

Two other figures complete the group. One figure depicts a Gallic chief committing suicide after he has killed his own wife. Also known as the Ludovisi Gaul, this sculpture group displays another heroic and noble deed of the foes, for typically women and children of the defeated would be murdered to avoid them from being captured and sold as slaves by the victors. The chief holds his fallen wife by the arm as he plunges his sword into his chest, where blood is already exiting the wound.

Ludovisi Gaul: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Epigonos, c. 230–220 BCE, in Pergamon, Turkey.

Sculpture in the Hellenistic Period

A key component of Hellenistic sculpture is the expression of a sculpture's face and body to elicit an emotional response from the viewer.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the new Hellenistic style of sculpture from the previous Classical era, and discuss the significance of Roman patronage in the second century BCE

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hellenistic sculpture takes the naturalism of the body's form and expression to level of hyper-realism where the expression of the sculpture's face and body elicit an emotional response.
- Drama and pathos are new factors in Hellenistic sculpture. The style of the sculpting is no longer idealized. Rather, they are often exaggerated, and details are emphasized to add a new, heightened level of motion and pathos.
- New compositions and states of mind are explored in Hellenistic sculptures including old age, drunkenness, sleep, agony, and despair.
- Portraiture became popular in this period. The subjects are depicted with a sense of naturalism that displays their imperfections.
- Hellenistic sculpture was in especially high demand after the Greek peninsula fell to the Romans in 146 BCE. Notable sculptures produced for Roman patrons include
  Laocoön and His Sons and the Farnese Bull.

Key Terms

- **satyr**: A male companion of Pan or Dionysus with the tail of a horse and a perpetual erection. Also known as a faun.
- **patrician**: An aristocrat or other elite member of society; it may also be used as an adjective.
- **pathos**: That quality or property of anything that touches the feelings or excites emotions and passions, especially that which awakens tender emotions, such as pity, sorrow, and the like; a contagious warmth of feeling, action, or expression; a pathetic quality.

Hellenistic sculpture continues the trend of increasing naturalism seen in the stylistic development of Greek art. During this time, the rules of Classical art were pushed and abandoned in favor of new themes, genres , drama, and pathos that were never explored by previous Greek artists.

Furthermore, the Greek artists added a new level of naturalism to their figures by adding an elasticity to their form and expressions, both facial and physical. These figures interact with their audience in a new theatrical manner by eliciting an emotional reaction from their view—this is known as pathos.

Nike of Samothrace

One of the most iconic statues of the period, the Nike of Samothrace, also known as the Winged Victory (c. 190 BCE), commemorates a naval victory. This Parian marble statue depicts Nike, now armless and headless, alighting onto the prow of the ship. The prow is visible beneath her feet, and the scene is filled with theatricality and naturalism as the statue reacts to her surroundings.

Nike's feet, legs, and body thrust forward in contradiction to her drapery and wings that stream backwards. Her clothing whips around her from the wind and her wings lift upwards. This depiction provides the impression that she has just landed and that this is the precise moment that she is settling onto the ship's prow.

In addition to the sculpting, the figure was most likely set within a fountain, creating a theatrical setting where both the imagery and the auditory effect of the fountain would create a striking image of action and triumph.

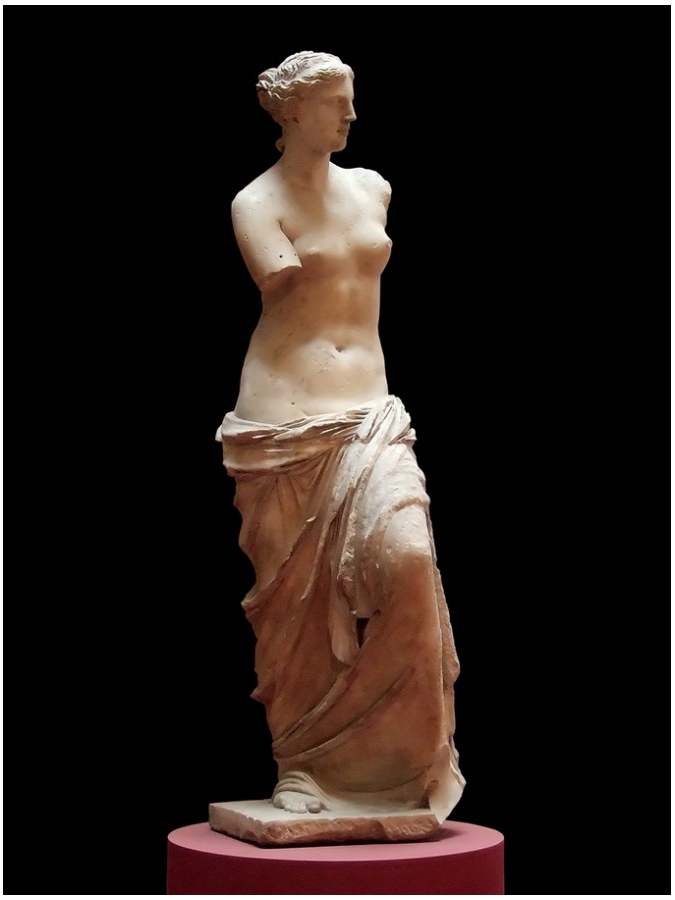
Nike of Samothrace: Also known as the Winged Victory (c. 190 BCE), this marble statue, in Samothrace, Greece, commemorates a naval victory.

Venus de Milo

Also known as the Aphrodite of Melos (c. 130–100 BCE), this sculpture by Alexandros of Antioch, is another well-known icon of the Hellenistic period. Today the goddess's arms are missing. It has been suggested that one arm clutched at her slipping drapery while the other arm held out an apple, an allusion to the Judgment of Paris and the abduction of Helen.

Originally, like all Greek sculptures, the statue would have been painted and adorned with metal jewelry, which is evident from the attachment holes. This image is in some ways similar to Praxitiles' Late Classical sculpture Aphrodite of Knidos (fourth century BCE), but it is considered to be more erotic than its earlier counterpart.

For instance, while she is covered below the waist, Aphrodite makes little attempt to cover herself. She appears to be teasing and ignoring her viewer , instead of accosting him and making eye contact.



Venus de Milo: This marble statue, in Melos, Greece, was sculpted by Alexandros of Antioch, c. 130–100 BCE.

Altered States

While the Nike of Samothrace exudes a sense of drama and the Venus de Milo a new level of feminine sexuality, other Greek sculptors explored new states of being. Instead of reproducing images of the ideal Greek male or female, as was favored during the Classical period, sculptors began to depict images of the old, tired, sleeping, and drunk—none of which are ideal representations of a man or woman.

The Barberini Faun

The Barberini Faun, also known as the Sleeping Satyr (c. 220 BCE), depicts an effeminate figure, most likely a satyr, drunk and passed out on a rock. His body splays across the rock face without regard to modesty.

He appears to have fallen to sleep in the midst of a drunken revelry and he sleeps restlessly, his brow is knotted, face worried, and his limbs are tense and stiff. Unlike earlier depicts of nude men, but in a similar manner to the Venus de Milo, the Barberini Faun seems to exude sexuality.

Barberini Faun: This is a Roman marble copy, in Rome, Italy, of the Greek bronze original, c. 220 BCE. Italy.

Drunken Old Woman

Images of drunkenness were also created of women, which can be seen in a statue attributed to the Hellenistic artist Myron of a drunken beggar woman. This woman sits on the floor with her arms and legs wrapped around a large jug and a hand gripping the jug's neck.

Grape vines decorating the top of the jug make it clear that it holds wine. The woman's face, instead of being expressionless, is turned upward and she appears to be calling out, possibly to passersby. Not only is she intoxicated, but she is old: deep wrinkles line her face, her eyes are sunken, and her bones stick out through her skin.

Drunken Old Woman: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Myron, c. 200–180 BCE.

Seated Boxer

Another image of the old and weary is a bronze statue of a seated boxer. While the image of an athlete is a common theme in Greek art, this bronze presents a Hellenistic twist.

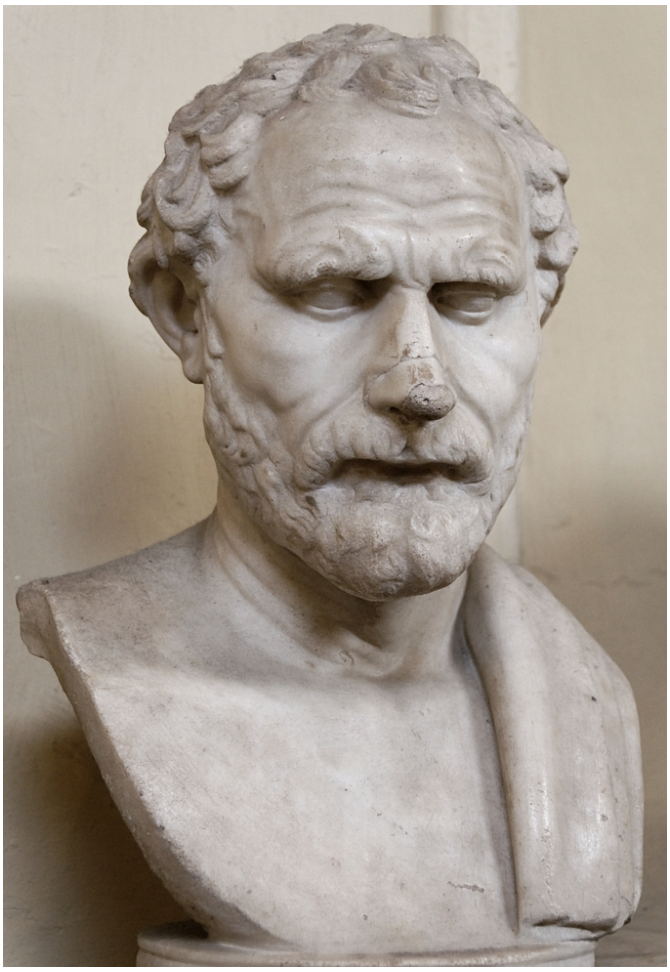
He is old and tired, much like the Late Classical image of a Weary Herakles. However, unlike Herakles, the boxer is depicted beaten and exhausted from his pursuit. His face is swollen, lip spilt, and ears cauliflowered. This is not an image of a heroic, young athlete but rather an old, defeated man many years past his prime.

Seated Boxer: This bronze statue, c. 100–50 BCE, is in Rome, Italy.

Portraiture

Individual portraits, instead of idealization, also became popular during the Hellenistic period. A portrait of Demosthenes by Polyeuktos (280 BCE) is not an idealization of the Athenian statesman and orator. Instead, the statue takes notes of Demosthenes's characteristic features, including his overbite, furrowed brow, stooped shoulders, and old, loose skin.

Even portrait busts, often copied from Polyeuktos' famed statue, depict the weariness and sorrow of a man despairing the conquest of Philip II and end of Athenian democracy.



Demosthenes: This is a Roman copy of the Greek, bronze, original portrait bust by Polyeuktos.

Roman Patronage

The Greek peninsula fell to Roman power in 146 BCE. Greece was a key province of the Roman Empire, and the Roman's interest in Greek culture helped to circulate Greek art around the empire, especially in Italy, during the Hellenistic period and into the Imperial period of Roman hegemony .

Greek sculptors were in high demand throughout the remaining territories of the Alexander's empire and then throughout the Roman Empire. Famous Greek statues were copied and replicated for wealthy Roman patricians and Greek artists were commissioned for large-scale sculptures in the Hellenistic style.

Originally cast in bronze, many Greek sculptures that we have today survive only as marble Roman copies. Some of the most famous colossal marble groups were sculpted in the Hellenistic style for wealthy Roman patrons and for the imperial court. Despite their Roman audience, these were purposely created in the Greek style and continued to display the drama, tension, and pathos of Hellenistic art.

Laocoön and His Sons

Laocoön was a Trojan priest of Poseidon who warned the Trojans, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts," when the Greeks left a large wooden horse at the gates of Troy. Athena or Poseidon (depending on the story's version), upset by his vain warning to his people, sent two sea serpents to torture and kill the priest and his two sons.

Laocoön and His Sons, a Hellenistic marble sculpture group (attributed by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder to the sculptors Agesander, Athenodoros, and Polydorus from the island of Rhodes) was created in the early first century CE to depict this scene from Virgil's epic, The Aeneid.

Laocoön and His Sons: This marble statue is attributed by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder to the sculptors Agesander, Athenodoros, and Polydorus from the island of Rhodes.

Similar to other examples of Hellenistic sculpture, Laocoön and His Sons depicts a chiastic scene filled with drama, tension, and pathos. The figures writhe as they are caught in the coils of the serpents. The faces of the three men are filled with agony and toil, which is reflected in the tension and strain of their muscles. Laocoön stretches out in a long diagonal from his right arm to his left as he attempts to free himself.

His sons are also entangled by the serpents, and their faces react to their doom with confusion and despair. The carving and detail, the attention to the musculature of the body, and the deep drilling, seen in Laocoön's hair and beard, are all characteristic elements of the Hellenistic style.

Laocoön and His Sons: This detail of Laocoön's face shows the carving and detail, the attention to the musculature of the body, and the deep drilling that are all characteristic elements of the Hellenistic style.

Farnese Bull

The Farnese Bull (c. 200–180 BCE), named for the patrician Roman family who owned the statue in the Italian Renaissance , is believed to have been created for the collection of Asinius Pollio, a Roman patrician. Pliny the Elder attributes the statue to the artists and brothers Apolllonius and Tauriscus of Trallles, Rhodes.

The colossal marble statue, carved from a single block of marble, depicts the myth of Dirce, the wife of the King of Thebes, who was tied to a bull by the sons of Antiope to punish her for mistreating their mother. The composition is large and dramatic, and demands the viewer to encircle it in order to view and appreciate the narrative and pathos from all angles. The various angles reveal different expressions, from the terror of Dirce, to the determination of Antiope's sons, to the savagery of the bull.

Farnese Bull: This marble statue, c. 200–180 BCE, was sculpted by Apollonius and Tauriscus of Tralles, Rhodes.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Didyma. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Didyma.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stoa in Athens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stoa_in_Athens.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 545px-Zevs-tempelet_med_Akropolis_bak.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6733532. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Corinthian Capital Agora. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Corinthian_Capital_Agora.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hypaethraltempel. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hypaethraltempel.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abacus (Architecture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abacus_(architecture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Temple of Olympian Zeus, Athens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Olympian_Zeus,_Athens. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stoa. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stoa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Acanthus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/acanthus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Temple of Apollo (Didyma). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Apollo_(Didyma). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Corinthian Order. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Corinthian_order. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Classical Order. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_order%23Corinthian_order. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stoa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stoa of Attalos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoa_of_Attalos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hellenistic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Orthogonal. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/orthogonal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Volute. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/volute. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Colonnade. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/colonnade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dipteral. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dipteral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Modell_Pergamonmuseum.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=301101. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Berlin - Pergamonmuseum - Altar 01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin_-_Pergamonmuseum_-_Altar_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Theatre_of_Pergamon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42275209. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pergamonmuseum - Antikensammlung - Pergamonaltar 13. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pergamonmuseum_-_Antikensammlung_-_Pergamonaltar_13.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 316px-Ludovisi_Gaul_Altemps_Inv8608_n3.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1362961. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Dying gaul. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dying_gaul.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grundriss-Pergamonlatar rotate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Grundriss-Pergamonlatar_rotate.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nereus, Doris, Okeanos Pergamonaltar. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nereus,_Doris,_Okeanos_Pergamonaltar_.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ludovisi Gaul. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludovisi_Gaul. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dying Gaul. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dying_Gaul. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pergamon Altar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pergamon_Altar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pergamon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pergamon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Torc. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/torc. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gaul. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Gaul. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aphrodite of Milos. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aphrodite_of_Milos.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- toro-farnese.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Toro_farnese.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Laocooon-inv1059-1064-1067.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Laocoon_Pio-Clementino_Inv1059-1064-1067.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nike of Samothrake Louvre Ma2369. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nike_of_Samothrake_Louvre_Ma2369.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Laocoon-detail.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Laocoon_Pio-Clementino_Inv1059-1064-1067_n6.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thermae boxer Massimo Inv1055. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thermae_boxer_Massimo_Inv1055.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barberini Faun front Glyptothek Munich 218 n1. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barberini_Faun_front_Glyptothek_Munich_218_n1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Demosthenes Chiaramonti Inv1555. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demosthenes_Chiaramonti_Inv1555.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bebada2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bebada2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Money and Fashion: The Commissions of Roman Patrons. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/8030. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Greek Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_art%23Hellenistic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Venus de Milo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_de_Milo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hellenistic Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_art%23Sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barberini Faun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barberini_Faun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Demosthenes. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Demosthenes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Winged Victory of Samothrace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Winged_Victory_of_Samothrace. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pathos. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pathos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Satyr. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/satyr. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 6.7: The Hellenistic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: The Etruscans

7.1: Early Etruscan Art
7.2: Later Etruscan Art

This page titled 7: The Etruscans is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

7.1: Early Etruscan Art

The Etruscan Culture

Etruscan society developed in central Italy. The Orientalizing period connected Etruscan arts with eastern Mediterranean culture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the Orientalizing period of Etruscan culture and their use of gold and ivory

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Etruscan civilization flourished in central Italy and expanded as far north as the Po River and as far south as the Tiber River and northern Campania.
- Despite having a distinct artistic style , due to Greek influence, Etruscan art follows the artistic and stylistic developments of the Greeks, and is divided into similar artistic periods, including the Orientalizing (700–600 BCE), Archaic (600–480 BCE), and Classical (480–200 BCE) periods.
- Etruscan art during the Orientalizing period demonstrates oriental influences, similar to those seen in Greek art, including the use of intricate designs, patterning, and the depiction of animals—including lions, leopards, and composite animals like sphinxes and griffins.
- The Etruscans are known for their metalwork , and especially for their skill in crafting gold. Gold jewelry was popular among the Etruscans and often buried with its owners. The fibulas, earrings, bracelets, and other pieces of jewelry and decoration demonstrate Etruscan skill with repoussé and granulation .

Key Terms

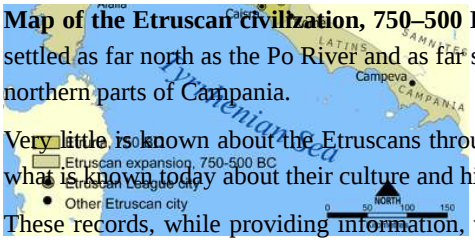
- **pyxis**: A shape of vessel from the classical world, usually a cylindrical box with a separate lid.
- **granulation**: The attachment of granules of precious metal to the underlying metal of jewelry.
- **repoussé**: A metalworking technique in which a thin sheet of malleable metal is shaped by hammering from the reverse side to create a design in low relief.

Etruscan Civilization

The Etruscan civilization thrived in central Italy during the first millennium BCE. Occupying the approximate area of present-day Tuscany, the region derives its name from the word Etruscan.

During the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, the Etruscans became sea traders and actively participated in Mediterranean trade. The civilization also began to expand, and the Etruscans eventually settled as far north as the Po River and as far south as the Tiber River and the northern parts of Campania.

Aside from trade, a large part of Etruscan wealth came from the rich natural resources of the territories they lived in. The soil was fertile for agriculture and the land was rich with minerals and metals, which were mined. Etruscan cities and regions appear to have been ruled over by a king, and Etruscan kings are accounted for as the early rulers of Rome . While the Romans proudly remember overthrowing their Etruscan rulers, many aspects of Etruscan society were adopted by the Romans.



Map of the Etruscan civilization, 750–500 BCE: The Etruscans eventually settled as far north as the Po River and as far south as the Tiber River and the northern parts of Campania.

Very little is known about the Etruscans through written records. The Etruscans did not leave any written historical accounts, and what is known today about their culture and history is from written records by the Greeks and Romans that have survived. These records, while providing information, view Etruscan culture from an outside, foreign eye and so can be deceptive in their accounts of Etruscan society. Because of this, most of what is known about the Etruscans comes from archaeological records.

Since many Etruscan cities have been continually occupied since their foundation—first by the Etruscans, then the Romans, up to today—a majority of Etruscan archaeological sites are tombs and necropoleis. Archaeologists and historians rely on Etruscan funerary culture to derive ideas about the society's culture, customs, and history.

Orientalizing Art

Despite the distinctive character of Etruscan art, the history and stylistic divisions generally follows the divisions seen within Greek art history and stylistic developments. The Etruscans established contact with Eastern cultures, including Greeks, Phoenicians, and Egyptians, around 700 BCE, and this marks the beginning of the Orientalizing period of their culture.

As is similar with the Greek Orientalizing period, the art of this period in Etruria reflects Eastern themes and motifs . The patterning and depictions of animals were common— especially lions, leopards, and mythological composite creatures such as sphinxes and griffins .

Gold and Ivory

The Etruscans were master metal smiths and mined various ores including iron, tin, copper, silver, and gold; they even smelted bronze to work with. Artists who worked with metal were extremely talented and developed unique skills and specialized techniques, including granulation and repoussé.

Gold ornaments and jewelry depict both of these techniques, demonstrating the Etruscans' precision when working with gold to create intricate designs and patterns in incredibly fine detail. The gold jewelry that came from a wealthy Etruscan family's tomb (the Regolini-Galassi tomb), including an enormous gold fibula and golden bracelets that date from 650–600 BCE, displays these techniques.

The elaborate and intricate metal work was not isolated to the Orientalizing period but continued to be created by the Etruscans through the next several centuries. A gold reel, possibly an earring stud, from the early fourth century BCE represents the combination of both the hammered relief of repoussé as well as the careful and precise fusing of tiny gold granules.

The work also shows lingering, oriental-inspired designs that depict repetitive images of Pegasus and the chimera. Another earring from the Archaic period combines repoussé and granulation with glass beads and intricate, patterned designs.

Gold Earring Stud: This earring from the Archaic period combines repoussé and granulation with glass beads and intricate, patterned designs, c. 530–480 BCE.

Gold Stud with Pegasus and Chimera: Earring stud with Pegasus and Chimera. Gold. c. 4th century BCE.

Other objects besides the gold jewelry found in the Regolini-Galassi tomb demonstrate the Orientalizing influences on Etruscan art. An ivory pyxis , which appears to imitate a Phoenican style, has a clearly Etruscan origin.

The ivory was imported into the region, likely from an Eastern source. The reliefs are carved in an Etruscan style, with egg-shaped human heads and distinctly thin, straight noses and oval eyes. The sphinxes on the lid and on the bottom register , as well as the frieze of animals at the op, reflect the Eastern theme. The middle register depicts a procession of horses and chariots.

Pyxis with a sphinx-shaped handle lid: Note the sphinx-shaped handle lid. This piece is made of ivory, c. 650–625 BCE. It is from the Regolini-Galassi tomb, Cerveteri, Italy.

Etruscan Ceramics

The Etruscans are known for their impasto and bucchero pottery, as well as local versions of black- and red-figure vase painting.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the ceramic works of the Etruscan culture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Etruscans are known for their impasto and bucchero pottery. Their contact with Greek settlements also influenced their production of black- and red-figure vase painting.
- Impasto is a coarse, unrefined clay used in the production of funerary vases and storage vessels . Its popularity spread beyond the Etruscan civilization , becoming a major exported good to Greek colonies in southern Italy.
- Bucchero is a fine, often thin, black pottery that is fired and burnished to create a rich, lustrous shine. It was developed to imitate metal and became a luxury good in its own right.
- Etruscan black-figure painting initially imitated the Corinthian and Attic styles before adopting a manneristic silhouette technique towards the end of its existence.

- Etruscan red-figure painting began as pseudo-red-figure, involving lighter figures painted on a black slip . Subject matter grew increasingly minimalistic during the second half of the fourth century BCE.

Key Terms

- **hydria**: A three-handled ceramic vessel used for carrying water.
- **symposium**: In ancient Graeco-Roman culture, a drinking party.
- **bucchero**: A type of dark grey Etruscan terra cotta pottery.

The Etruscans were well known for their pottery, which was typically made from two materials: impasto and bucchero.

Impasto

Impasto is a coarse form of pottery made from a clay that contains chips of mica, a silicate, or stone. In its soft form, impasto clay can range from red to brown. After it is fired, its surface becomes black and glossy.

It was first used by the Villanovan civilization, which preceded the Etruscans, around the tenth century BCE. Between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, the Greek colonies to the south of Etruria began importing impasto vessels, a testament to their intercultural popularity.

The Etruscans used impasto for basic, utilitarian pottery, such as storage jars and cooking pots, as well as for funerary urns during the Orientalizing period. Artists incised the vessels with geometric designs, as well as stylized images of humans and animals.

The amphora in the image below depicts a spiral and a stylized bird, among other designs. Spiral motifs appear frequently in the art of numerous European cultures beginning in the Neolithic era. While their meanings are still a matter of debate, scholars hypothesize that spirals could symbolize astronomical phenomena or specific religious references.

The bird, on the other hand, could be a reference to love or fertility. Turan (the Etruscan goddess of love, fertility, and vitality) was commonly associated with a variety of avian species. Similarly the lynx, a bird-like creature in Etruscan mythology, also symbolizes love.

Etruscan impasto amphora: Spiral motifs appear frequently in the art of numerous European cultures beginning in the Neolithic era. This amphora is c. 700–680 BCE.

Bucchero

Bucchero pottery, developed around 675 BCE, was an Etruscan invention. It was created from a fine clay fired to produce a glossy black surface and burnished to shine. A finished bucchero surface imitated the appearance of metal.

The Etruscans produced a variety of objects—such as plates, chalices, vases, and pitchers—from bucchero, demonstrating the versatility of the material. While less expensive than metal, it was still considered a luxury item and was exported around the Mediterranean. Bucchero goods have been found as far east as Egypt and Syria.

During the Orientalizing period, objects could be as little as less than two millimeters. This is type of bucchero ware is known today as bucchero sottile, or delicate bucchero, and the thin delicate walls further reinforced the material's imitation of metal.

Decoration on bucchero was often limited to abstract designs and did not usually include figures. Bucchero was often simply decorated with incised lines that formed geometric and abstract patterns. Some patterns were incised with a stylus and others with a toothed wheel or comb-like instruments to create consistent rows of dots or patterns of dots in the shape of fans.

While bucchero thrived during the Orientalizing and Archaic periods, its production began to decline during the Classical period as painted Greek pottery became more available and popular in Etruscan culture, and as goods for funerary deposits.

Bucchero Etruscan plate: Decoration on bucchero was often limited to abstract designs and did not usually include figures. This plate is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Vase Painting

Vase painting in the Etruscan culture thrived from the seventh to the fourth century BCE. It was strongly influenced by Greek vase painting and followed the main trends in style over the period. Besides being producers in their own right, the Etruscans were the main export market for Greek pottery outside Greece. Among the Etruscans, richly decorated vases were often interred with the dead.

Black-Figure Painting

Initially, Etruscan vases followed the examples of black-figure vase painting from Corinth and East Greece. It is assumed that in the earliest phase, vases were produced mainly by immigrants from Greece.

They mainly produced amphorae, hydriai and jugs. Depictions included revelers, symposia , and animal friezes . Mythological motifs occur more rarely, but are already created with great care.

By this time, Etruscan vase painting began to take its main influence from Attic vase painting. The black-figure style ended about 480 BCE. In its final phase, it developed a tendency toward a manneristic style of silhouette drawing.

Etruscan hydria with black-figure painting: The black-figure style ended about 480 BCE. In its final phase, it developed a tendency toward a manneristic style of silhouette drawing.

Pseudo-Red-Figure Painting

The Etruscans developed an imitative adoption of the red-figure technique (known as pseudo-red-figure) around 490 BCE, nearly half a century after that style had been invented in Greece. As on some early Attic vases, this was achieved by covering the whole vase body in black shiny slip, then adding figures on top, using paints that would oxidize into red or white during firing .

In true red-figure painting, the red areas were left free of slip. In pseudo-red-figure painting, internal details were marked by incisions, similar to the usual practice in black-figure vase painting, rather than painted on, as is true in red-figure painting. Even after true red-figure painting became the dominant style, some workshops continued to specialize in pseudo-red-figure painting into the fourth century BCE.

Athena and Poseidon: A pseudo-red-figure krater by the Nazzano Painters, c. 360 BCE.

Red-Figure Painting

Only by the end of the fifth century BCE was the true red-figure technique introduced to Etruria. In the second half of the fourth century BCE, mythological themes disappeared from the repertoire of the Etruscan vase painters.

Instead, the vase bodies were mostly covered with ornamental and floral motifs, and larger compositions only occurred in exceptional cases.

Etruscan red-figure stamnos: In the second half of the fourth century BCE, mythological themes disappeared and the vase bodies were mostly covered with ornamental and floral motifs. This stamnos is c. 360–340 BCE.

Etruscan Sculpture

Archaic Etruscan art often includes terra cotta statues that are stylistically and aesthetically Etruscan but influenced by Greek art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the stylistic influences on Etruscan sculpture during the Archaic period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During the Archaic period (600–480 BCE), the Etruscans began to build large wood and terra cotta temples, create underground burial chambers, and produce large-scale stone and terra cotta sculptures .
- The stylistic influences from the Greeks on Etruscan Archaic sculpture include the Archaic smile and the stylized patterning of hair and clothing. However, Etruscan sculpture was distinct. The figures had egg-shaped heads and almond eyes, were clothed, and their bodies had a higher degree of plasticity.
- The Centaur of Vulci is a subtractive sculpture straddling the Orientalizing and Archaic periods. It uses some Greek attributes but modifies them in a way to make the object uniquely Etruscan.The Apulu of Veii is an example of Etruscan Archaic sculpture. The figure, believed to have been made by the Etruscan artist Vulca from Veii, depicts Apulu in mid-stride, with an outstretched arm. The figure is more dynamic than Greek Archaic examples.
- The Sarcophagus of the Spouses depicts a couple reclining together on a dining couch. The figures are distinctly Etruscan, animated through their gestures, with faces made from the same mold and distinguished by feminine or masculine characteristics.

Key Terms

- **Archaic smile**: A technique used by Greek Archaic sculptors, especially in the second quarter of the 6th century BCE, possibly to suggest that their subject was alive and infused with a sense of well-being.
- **subtractive**: A sculptural process in which the artist begins with more material than he or she needs and gradually takes away material until the desired form is achieved.
- **terra cotta**: Earthenware clay after it has been fired in a kiln.
- **akroteria**: Architectural ornaments placed on a flat base and mounted at the apex of the pediment of a building in the classical style.
- **additive**: A sculptural process in which the artist begins with little to no material and gradually attaches more material until the desired form is achieved.
- **sarcophagus**: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.

Etruscan Sculpture

During the Archaic period (600–480 BCE), the Etruscan culture flourished. The Etruscans began building stone and wood temples and creating subterranean tombs. Etruscan trade flourished, and the civilization expanded to its furthest boundaries.

The period and style of art is named for its Greek counterpart. Although there are similarities between Etruscan and Greek Archaic art, significant differences mark specific sculptures as uniquely Etruscan.

The Centaur of Vulci

The area of Italy that was home to the etruscan civilization is rich in volcanic rocks such as tufa and nenfro. Such materials provide ample media for sculptures that are made through subtractive processes like carving and chiseling.

The Centaur of Vulci (c. 590–580 BCE), a nenfro statue discovered in a tomb in the necropolis of Poggio Maremma in Vulci Archaeological Park, appears to mark a transition between the Orientalizing and Archaic styles. Similar to Greek centaur sculptures of this period, the body appears to depict a standing human with a stylized cylindrical equine body emerging from the back.

Unlike the Greek Orientalizing and Archaic centaurs, this sculpture was produced without a tail. Its arms and legs below the knees are missing. Its hands are visible on the hips, suggesting a stiff pose like early Greek kouroi. Its eyes are large and almond-shaped, and it might have worn an Archaic smile before it was damaged.

The centaur's hair falls in stylized plaits like its Greek counterparts. The style of braids, however, appears less like beads, as seen in the Greek kouros , and more like twisted plies of a rope. On the back of the centaur's head, three braids and several ringlets run in a horizontal pattern to connect with the braids on the left and right. Evidence of drill work can be seen in the curls that fall across the centaur's forehead.

Centaur of Vulci: A nenfro statue discovered in a tomb in the necropolis of Poggio Maremma in Vulci Archaeological Park.

Terra Cotta

Few examples of large-scale or monumental Etruscan sculptures survive. Very few Etruscan bronzes escaped being melted down for reuse, and the Etruscans did not often work in marble or other hard stones. Instead, many surviving examples of Etruscan sculpture are in terra cotta, or earthenware clay that has been fired in a kiln .

Working with terra cotta was a means for additive sculpture. Unlike the subtractive sculptural techniques employed in the carving of rock or stone, this allowed for subtle modeling and more expressive and dynamic features.

A pair of winged horses from the Altar of the Queen, an Etruscan sanctuary located in Tarquinia, are examples of the Etruscans' skill and modeling with terra cotta. The horses are muscular, with strong chests, fine legs, and elongated bodies. They appear to prance as they wait to pull a chariot. Their necks arch , with manes blowing in the wind, and their heads are drawn in, as if pulled back by a pair of unseen reins.

Winged Horses: Working with terra cotta lets the artist create subtle modeling and more expressive and dynamic features, as seen in these horses.

Apulu of Veii

The Apulu of Veii is a prime example of Etruscan sculpture during the Archaic period. Apulu, the Etruscan equivalent of Apollo, is a slightly larger than life-size terra cotta akroteria figure in the Portonaccio Temple at Veii, an Etruscan city just north of Rome .

The figure was part of a group of akroteria that stood on the ridgepole of the temple and depicted the myth of Heracles and the Ceryneaian hind . The figure of Apulu confronts the hero, Heracles, who is attempting to capture a deer sacred to Apulu's sister, Artumes (Artemis). Apulu is the most intact surviving statue of the akroteria figures from this temple.

The figure of Apulu has several Greek characteristics. The face is similar to the faces of Archaic Greek kouroi figures. The face is simply carved and an archaic smile provides a notion of emotion and realism . The hair of Apulu is stylized and falls across his shoulders and down his neck and back in stylized, geometric twists that seem to represent braids. The figure, like Greek figures, was painted in bright colors, and the edge of his toga appears to be lined in blue.

Apulu of Veii: This painted terra cotta statue is a slightly larger than life-size terra cotta akroteria figure in the Portonaccio Temple at Veii, Italy.

Unlike Archaic Greek statues and kouroi, the figure of Apulu is full of movement and presents the viewer with an entirely different aesthetic from the Greek style. The figure of Apulu is dynamic and flexible. He strides forward with an arm stretched out. He leans

on his front foot, and his back foot is slightly raised.

The body is more faithfully modeled (comparable to later Greek kouroi), and instead of being nude, he wears a toga that is draped over one shoulder. The garment's folds are patterned and stylized but cling to the body, allowing the viewer to clearly distinguish the god's chest and thigh muscles. While the Etruscan artist applied an Archaic smile to Apulu, the figure's lips are full and his head is more egg-shaped than round—both characteristics of Etruscan art and sculpture.

The Apulu of Veii is believed to have been made by the Etruscan artist Vulca of Veii. Besides this sculpture, Vulca is credited by Roman historians with the creation of the cult statue for the Temple of Jupiter Optiumus Maximus, the most important temple in Rome. Vulca created this statue when the last Etruscan king Tarquinius Superbus ruled Rome.

The Sarcophagus of the Spouses

A late sixth century sarcophagus excavated from a tomb in Cerveteri is a terra cotta sarcophagus that depicts a couple reclining together on a dining couch. The sarcophagus displays not only the Etruscan Archaic style but also Etruscan skill in working with terra cotta.

The figures' torsos are modeled, and their heads are in a typical Etruscan egg-shape with almond shaped eyes, long noses, and full lips. Their hair is stylized, and their gestures are animated. The use of gesture is seen throughout Etruscan art, both in sculpture and painting. The woman might have originally held a small vessel , and the couple appears to be intimate and loving due to the fact that man has his arm around the woman.

Sarcophagus of the Spouses: The sarcophagus displays not only the Etruscan Archaic style but also Etruscan skill in working with painted terra cotta. C. 520 BCE. Found in the Banditaccia Necropolis, Cerveteri, Italy.

A close look at the figures reveals some peculiarities. First, their faces are the same and in fact were most likely created from the same mold, a technique common in Etruscan terra cotta sculpture. The identical faces are differentiated by the addition of female and male hairstyles, including the man's beard. Furthermore, despite the modeling of their upper bodies, the legs of the figures are flat and rather lifeless, an odd comparison to the liveliness of the figures' upper halves.

Etruscan Temples

Etruscan temples derive from Greek models but are distinguished by a high podium, deep porch, prostyle columns, and frontality.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast Etruscan temples with their Greek counterparts

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The superstructures of Etruscan temples were built from wood and mud brick that was often covered in stucco , plaster, or painted for decoration. The temple had a stone or tufa foundation, and the roof was covered in protective terra cotta tiles.
- Despite their Greek origins, Etruscan temples are unique. They are frontal and axial and often have more than one cella . Etruscan temples stand on high podia with a single central staircase located at the front. Prostyle Tuscan columns stand on a deep porch and support the roof.
- The temple's wide eaves, low pitch roof, and terra cotta tiles protect the building's organic materials. Antefixes further protect the building from the elements and animals by concealing the wood beams.
- Akroteria , life-sized terra cotta sculptures , were placed along the ridgepole and on the cornice and peaks to decorate the temple. These figures were often tied together thematically or through myths.

Key Terms

- **antefix**: The vertical blocks that terminate the covering tiles of the roof of a Roman, Etruscan, or Greek temple.
- **hind**: A female deer, especially a red deer at least two years old.
- **cella**: The inner chamber of a temple where the cult image or statue is kept.

Etruscan Temples

Etruscan temples were adapted from Greek- style temples to create a new Etruscan style, which, in turn would later influence Roman temple design. The temple was only one part of the templum, the defined sacred space that includes the building, altar and other sacred ground , springs, and buildings. As in Greece and Rome , the altar used for sacrifice and ritual ceremonies was located outside the temple.

Today only the foundations and terra cotta decorations of Etruscan temples remain, since the temples themselves were primarily built of wood and mud brick that eroded and degraded over time. The Etruscans used stone or tufa as the foundation of their temples.

Tufa is a local volcanic stone that is soft, easy to carve, and hardens when exposed to air. The superstructure of the temple was built from wood and mud brick. Stucco or plaster covered the walls and was either burnished to a shine or painted. Terra cotta roof tiles protected the organic material and increased the longevity and integrity of the building.

The foundation of an Etruscan temple at Orvieto: The central stairway highlights the frontality of the temple that once stood at this site.

The Basic Temple Structure

Archaeology and a written account by the Roman architect Vitruvius during the late first century BCE allow us to reconstruct a basic model of a typical Etruscan temple. Etruscan temples were usually frontal, axial, and built on a high podium with a single central staircase that allowed access to the cella (or cellas).

Two rows of prostyle columns stood on the front of the temple's portico . The columns were of the Tuscan order, a derivative of the Doric order consisting of a simple shaft on a base with a simple capital . A scale model of the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Minerva

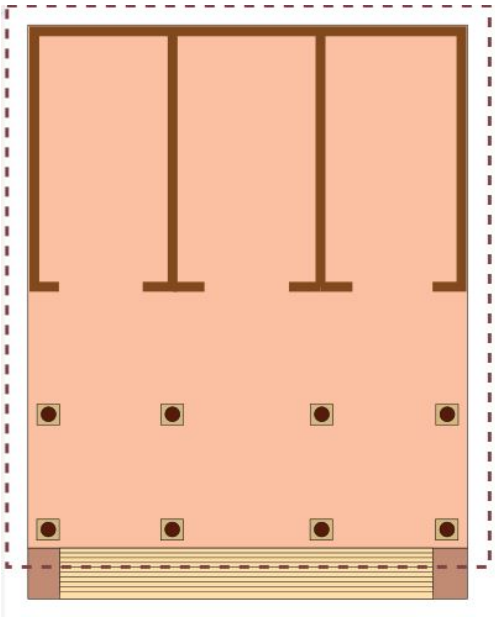
suggests that the bases and capitals of its columns were painted with alternating dark- and light-valued hues .

While most portico columns were made of wood, there is evidence that some were made of stone, as at Veii. They were tall and widely spaced across a deep porch, aligning with the walls of the cellas.

A model of Portonaccio Sanctuary of Minerva: C. 510 BCE, in Veii, Italy.

Etruscans often, although not always, worshiped multiple gods in a single temple. In such cases, each god received its own cella that housed its cult statue. Often the three-cella temple would be dedicated to the principal gods of the Etruscan pantheon —Tinia, Uni, and Menrva (comparable to the Roman gods Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva).

The wooden roof had a low pitch and was covered by a protective layer of terra cotta tiles. Eaves with wide overhangs helped to protect the organic material from rain.



Ground plan of an Etruscan temple: Etruscan temples were usually frontal, axial, and built on a high podium with a single central staircase that allowed access to the cella (or cellas).

Many aspects of Vitruvius' description fit what archaeologists can demonstrate. However deviations did exist. It is clear that Etruscan temples could take a number of forms and also varied over the 400-year period during which they were being made. Nevertheless, Vitruvius remains the inevitable starting point for a description and a contrast of Etruscan temples with their Greek and Roman equivalents.

Antefix

To further protect the roof beams from rain, insects, and birds, the end of each row of roof tiles was capped by an ornament known as an antefix. Antefixes also lined the area of the façade that corresponds to the top of the frieze and bottom of the pediment on a Greek temple.

These flat ornaments were usually made of terra cotta from a mold, and were sometimes made of stone. The antefixes were brightly painted and often depicted images female and male faces or simple geometric designs. The male faces were often representations of the Etruscan equivalent to Dionysus or his followers, including Silenus or fauns.

Although some antefixes depicted women, many of the female figures were representations of Gorgons, such as Medusa. The Gorgon-faced antefixes often showed a wide-eyed, circular face surrounded by either wings or snakes. The Gorgon and Dionysiac antefixes served apotropaic functions, intended to ward off evil and protect the temple site.

Antefix with the head of a Gorgon: The Gorgon and Dionysiac antefixes served apotropaic functions, intended to ward off evil and protect the temple site. This one is made of terra cotta, c. 6th–5th century BCE.

Antefix with a Silenus face: The male faces were often representations of the Etruscan equivalent to Dionysus or his followers, including Silenus or fauns.

Akroteria

For much of their history, the Etruscans did not decorate their temples in the Greek manner with friezes or pedimental sculptures. Instead, they placed terra cotta statues called akroteria along the roof's ridge pool and on the peaks and edges of the pediment.

These akroteria figures were generally built slightly larger than life-sized and were connected thematically. The Apulu of Veii is one example of an akroteria and is part of a sculptural group that depicts the story of Herakles and the Ceryneaian Hind .

Etruscan Tombs

Etruscan tombs, grave goods, and necropoleis provide invaluable evidence for the study of Etruscan society and culture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the tombs, funerary practices, and grave goods of the early Etruscans

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Etruscan burial methods include both cremation and inhumation. The funerary practices of the Etruscans changed from their use of cinerary urns in the shape of huts in the 9th and 8th century to subterranean tombs carved from tufa and living rock that was richly decorated.
- The Banditaccia Necropolis at Cervetri is known for its tufa tombs craved into tumuli. These tombs often took the shape of Etruscan homes and included roof beams and thatching carved into the ceilings. The tombs hold beds or niches or sarcophagi for the remains of the deceased.
- The Tomb of the Reliefs is a richly decorated, multi-generation tomb. The walls and pillars of the tomb are carved with a variety of objects that would be used by the dead in the afterlife, from everyday to specialty objects, including dining utensils, helmets, and swords.
- The Monterozzi Necropolis outside of Tarquinia was used from the 9th century to the 2nd century BCE. It is most well known for its frescoed tombs that include painted scenes of symposia , dancing, hunting, fishing, and ritual .
- The so-called Tomb of the Augurs was the first tomb in Tarquinia to depict Etruscan funerary customs in addition to the already established mythological scenes. The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing and the Tomb of the Leopards depict typical Etruscan funerary imagery in a common Etruscan painting style . The scenes relate to Etruscan culture and society, and show the inclusion of women in a symposium and a close connection to nature.

Key Terms

- **cippus**: A low, round, or rectangular pedestal used as a funerary boundary post by the Etruscans. The Romans would later use it for military purposes.
- **dromos**: A long, narrow passage to a tomb.
- **necropolis**: A large cemetery, especially one of elaborate construction in an ancient city.
- **augur**: A seer who bases his or her prophecies on interpretations derived from the behavior of birds.
- **tumulus**: A mound of earth, especially one placed over a prehistoric tomb; a barrow.
- **apotropaic**: Intended to ward off evil.

Etruscan Tombs

Tombs and necropoleis are among the most excavated and studied parts of Etruscan culture. Scholars learn about Etruscan society and culture from the study of Etruscan funerary practice. Burial urns and sarcophagi, both large and small, were used to hold the cremated remains of the dead.

Early forms of burial include the burial of ashes with grave goods in funerary urns and small ceramic huts. Later, in the seventh century BCE, the Etruscans began burying their dead in subterranean family tombs. The necropoleis at Cerveteri and Tarquinia are the most well known for their tumuli and frescoed tombs.

Hut urn: Etruscan cinerary hut urn with a door, made of impasto, 8th century BCE.

The grave goods found in these tombs point to the Etruscan belief in an afterlife that required the same types of goods and materials as in the world of the living. Many examples of Greek pottery have been recovered from Etruscan tombs. These vessels , along with other foreign goods, demonstrate the extent of the Etruscan trade network.

Painted scenes of frivolity, celebration, hunting, and religious practice tell the viewer about Etruscan daily life, rituals, their belief about the afterlife, and their social norms. The imagery and grave goods found in Etruscan tombs help inform the modern-day viewer about the nature of Etruscan society.

Banditaccia Necropolis at Cerveteri

The tombs of the Banditaccia Necropolis outside Cerveteri were carved into large, circular mounds known as tumuli. Each tumulus was the burial site for a single family, and one to four underground tombs were cut into the round tumulus.

Each tomb often represented a separate generation. The tombs were carved with a long, narrow entranceway known as a dromos that opened into a single or multi-room chamber. The decorative style of each chamber and tomb varied with the period and the family's wealth—the wealthier the family, the more intricately carved and decorated the tomb.

Banditaccia Necropolis: This is current-day photo of the Banditaccia Necropolis, c. 7th–2nd BCE, in Cerveteri, Italy.

Most tombs assumed the shape and style of Etruscan homes. The ceilings were often carved to represent wood roof beams. Thatching and decorative columns were often added to a room. The entrances and the individual rooms inside were often framed by doorways carved in a typical design.

Piers are topped with capitals carved in a stylized motif that resembles those from Corinthian columns. Each room contained beds or niches, sometimes with a carved tufa pillow, for the deposition of the body.

The most recent tombs in Banditaccia date from the third century BCE. Some of are marked by external boundary posts called cippi (singular cippus). Cylindrical cippi outside a tomb indicate that its occupants are male, while those in the form of small houses indicate female occupants.

Cippi outside a tomb in the Banditaccia necropolis: The phallic shape of these cippi indicates that men are interred in the tomb.

The Tomb of the Reliefs

The Tomb of the Reliefs is one of the most well known, largest, and richly decorated tombs from the Banditaccia Necropolis. This tomb is named for the numerous tufa reliefs of everyday objects inside.

The walls and piers are covered in carved and painted reliefs of everyday objects including rope, drinking cups, pitches, mirrors, knives, helmets, and shields. Not even companion animals were forgotten in the afterlife. A stretching cat adorns the base of the column on the left, while one in mid-motion (stalking prey?) adorns the base of the column on the right.

Elsewhere in the tomb, mythological subject matter appears. In the center is a depiction of the three-headed dog, Cerberus, the guardian to the underworld.

Tomb of the Reliefs: This is the interior of the Tomb of the Reliefs. It is composed of carved tufa and paint from the 3rd century BCE.

Monterozzi Necropolis at Tarquinia

The tombs of the Monterozzi Necropolis outside of Tarquinia are also subterranean burial chambers. The graves from the necropolis date from the seventh century BCE until the first century BCE. The tombs here are similar to the underground, tufa cut tombs of Cerveteri that were accessed through a dromos.

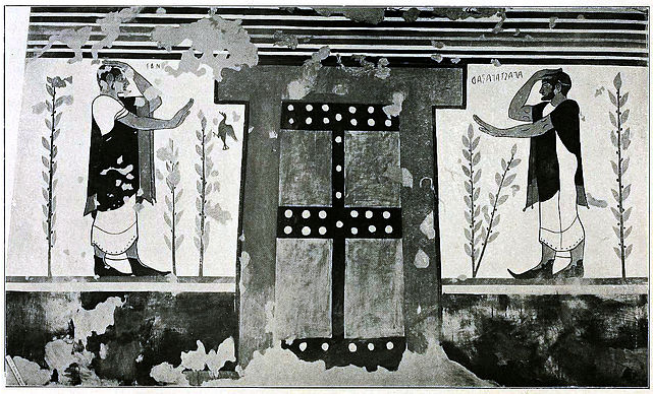
The Tomb of the Augurs

The Tomb of the Augurs (530–520 BCE) was one of the first in Tarquinia to have figurative decorations on all four walls of its main or only chamber. Its name derives from a possible misinterpretation of two figures on the rear wall.

This tomb is also the first to depict Etruscan funerary rites and funerary games in addition to mythological scenes, which were already established in traditional funerary art .

A fresco depicting a door flanked by two men appears on the rear wall of the Tomb of the Augurs. Scholars have come to different conclusions as to the significance of the door. Some interpret it as a representational illustration of the door to the tomb. Others argue that it is a symbolic door or portal to the underworld that acts as a barrier between the kingdom of the living and the kingdom of the dead.

The two men each extend one arm toward the door and places the other hand places the hand against his forehead in a gesture of salutation and mourning. Past interpretations identify the men as augurs. However, the word Apastanasar, which appears on the wall next to the man on the right, contains the root of apa, which means father. This leads scholars to conclude that they two men are more likely relatives of the deceased.



Augurs: A fresco on the interior rear wall of the Tomb of the Augurs, c. 530 BCE.

The Tomb of the Leopards

The Tomb of the Leopards (early fifth century BCE) consists of a single room and is one of the best-known tombs of Tarquinia. The Banqueting Scene, the most famous mural in the tomb, is divided into two panels: the pediment and the frieze .

The pediment depicts two white leopards in a heraldic composition . This depiction is reminiscent of the leopards from the pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu. The felines are used for their protective features.

Below the pediment is the main scene depicted on a central frieze that wraps around the room. This image depicts men and women with servants at a symposium. The scenes are festive and joyous. The men and women are distinguished respectively with dark and light skin tones .

The mere presence of women in the Banqueting Scene is unique for its time, suggesting a gender-inclusive culture. However, the women's assumption of the same positions as their male counterparts and their apparently active participation in the festivities suggest a level of gender equality unseen among the Greeks or, later, the Romans.

The Banqueting Scene: A fresco on the interior back wall of the Tomb of the Leopards, c. 480–470 BCE.

The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing

The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing consists of two rooms. The frescos in the first room are badly damaged but appear to depict Etruscans dancing outside. Two trees frame the doorway into the second room. This room gives the tomb its name, as it depicts a scene of men hunting and fishing.

Men in boats are fishing in a sea populated by fish and dolphins. On a rock outcropping in the water, one man prepares to dive, while another climbs to the top. Meanwhile, another man aims a slingshot at the birds that flock overhead. This scene depicts the Etruscans' relationship with nature and the importance of hunting and fishing in Etruscan society.

Tomb of Hunting and Fishing: This is a fresco on the interior back wall from the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, c. 530–520 BCE.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 395px-Etruscan_civilization_map.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=241378. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ear-stud BM GR1881.5-28.2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ear-stud_BM_GR1881.5-28.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan - Pyxis and lid with sphinx-shaped handle - Walters 71489 - Three Quarter. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Etruscan_-_Pyxis_and_lid_with_sphinx-shaped_handle_-_Walters_71489_-_Three_Quarter.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Pegasus reel Louvre Bj1887. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pegasus_reel_Louvre_Bj1887.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Jewelry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_jewelry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pyxis (Vessel). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyxis_(vessel). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Granulation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/granulation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Repousse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/repousse. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 347px-Hydrie_u00e0_figures_noires,_Etrurie_du00e9but_du_Ve_siu00e8cle_av_J.C..jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3789116. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Athena_Poseidon_Louvre_CA7426.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1756348. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 535px-Estamno_de_Etruria_(M.A.N._Madrid)_01.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3770656. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 480px-Amphore_u00e0_du00e9cor_incisu00e9_de_spirales_et_d'oiseaux_(Louvre_C551)_01.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37180903%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- bucchero-etruscan-plate-6.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MMA_etruscan_plate_6.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bucchero. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bucchero. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Impasto (Pottery). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impasto_(pottery). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spiral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiral#As_a_symbol. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Komos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Komos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Vase Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_vase_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hydria. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Symposium. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Symposium#Symposium_as_a_social_activity_in_antiquity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Turan (Mythology). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Turan_(mythology). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Impasto (Poterie). **Provided by**: Wikipedia [France]. **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impasto_(poterie). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- List of Etruscan Mythological Figures. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Etruscan_mythological_figures. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 439px-Centaure_de_Vulci.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39457623. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Horses Tarquinia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Etruscan_Horses_Tarquinia.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 607px-Apollon_de_Vu00e9ies.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39573228. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan sarcophagus. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Etruscan_sarcophagus.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Etruscan Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apollo of Veii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo_of_Veii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sarcophagus of the Spouses. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcophagus_of_the_Spouses. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ara della Regina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ara_della_Regina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vulca. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulca. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sarcophagus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sarcophagus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Archaic Smile. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaic_smile. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Terra Cotta. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/terracotta. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruskisk tempel. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Etruskisk_tempel.svg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MMA etruscan terracotta 2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MMA_etruscan_terracotta_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gorgona_pushkin_edited.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gorgona_pushkin_edited.jpg#/media/File:Gorgona_pushkin_edited.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minerva at Veii model.jpg. **Provided by**: Flickr. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/47357563@N06/7993846558. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Etruscan_temple_Orvieto.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=323286. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vitruvius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitruvius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_architecture#Temples. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antefix. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Antefix. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cella. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella%23Etruscan_temples. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tuscan Order. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuscan_order. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hind. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hind. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cella. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/cella. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 535px-Cippi.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8329148. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tombechasseetpu00eache. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tombechasseetp%C3%AAche.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italic - Urn in the Shape of a Hut and a Door - Walters 482312. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Italic_-_Urn_in_the_Shape_of_a_Hut_and_a_Door_-_Walters_482312.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tomba dei Rilievi (Banditaccia). **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tomba_dei_Rilievi_(Banditaccia).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Img022Cerveteri Necropoli della Banditaccia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Img022Cerveteri_Necropoli_della_Banditaccia.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Tomba dei Leopardi Tarquinia c. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tomba_dei_Leopardi_Tarquinia_c.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 640px-Tomba_degli_Auguri.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45843512. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Monterozzi Necropolis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Monterozzi_necropolis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tomb of the Augurs. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_the_Augurs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tomb of the Reliefs . **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_the_Reliefs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tomb of the Leopards. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_the_Leopards. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tarquinia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarquinia%23Necropoli. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tumulus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulus%23Italy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_art%23Etruscan_funerary_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tarquinia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarquinia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cerveteri. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerveteri. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dromos. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dromos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Necropolis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/necropolis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apotropaic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/apotropaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tumulus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tumulus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 7.1: Early Etruscan Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

7.2: Later Etruscan Art

Etruscan Bronze Sculpture

Etruscan bronze classical art demonstrates the range and skill of artists who crafted large votive offerings and small, personal trinkets.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the different forms of bronze objects produced by the Etruscans

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Few examples remain of any large-scale Etruscan bronze statues from the Classical era.
- The Chimera of Arezzo is a unique bronze votive offering to the god Tinia. The bronze sculpture demonstrates the Etruscans' skill in bronze casting through the beast's tense and plastic musculature, stylized mane, and fierce expression.
- The bronze Ombra della sera depicts the human body in an elongated fashion that is unusual for its time, while the Mars of Todi depicts a much more naturalistic representation. Small objects such as mirrors and cistae, small boxes, were also made of bronze during the Classical period. These objects were decorated with engravings or low relief casts that depict mythological scenes and were popular grave goods .
- While distinctly different from large-scale bronze, the small bronze objects demonstrate the variety and skill of Etruscan metal smiths that was first seen in the Orientalizing period with Etruscan jewelry and granulation techniques.

Key Terms

- **engrave**: To carve text or symbols into (something), usually for the purposes of identification or art.
- **cista**: A Latin word for a small box that used to hold unguents, jewels, or toiletries. They are generally used and related to women and domestic functions.
- **pyxis**: A small box.

Etruscan Bronze Sculptures

During its Classical period, from 480 to 300 BCE, Etruscan art was known for its hollow cast bronze sculptures and smaller utilitarian objects. Objects such as mirrors and cistae were engraved or incised with rich imagery that was made noticeable by a white substance inserted into the outlines and contour lines .

The Etruscan sculptures of human subjects range from naturalistic to exaggerated, almost modernist, forms , and the mythical creatures from the Greek and Eastern traditions found their way into their subject matter. In total, Etruscan sculpture incorporates a variety of cultural styles and motifs , including Orientalizing, Archaic , and Classical.

Very few Etruscan bronze sculptures survived because they were melted down in the following centuries to be used for other purposes.

Lost-Wax Casting

Also known by its French name cire perdue, lost-wax casting is the oldest method of producing metal sculptures. Although any material that can be liquified and subsequently solidified can be cast, metal is the most common. Of all metals, bronze is the most commonly cast.

In lost-wax casting, the sculptor begins by making a clay mold of the intended sculpture, coats it in wax, and applies an outer layer of plaster to it, fastening metal rods to hold the shell in place and wax rods to vent the mold. Intense heat is then applied, causing the wax to melt and flow out of the mold. This step leaves open channels into which molten metal is poured.

When the metal has cooled and hardened, the mold is broken, the sculpture is removed, and the holes left from the pins and rods are filled and smoothed. Finally, the sculpture is polished and ready for display. Because the mold must be destroyed, sculptors use the lost-wax method to produce one-of-a-kind sculptures.

Chimera of Arezzo

The bronze statue of the Chimera , discovered in the city of Arezzo in 1553, has recently been judged as a forgery. The reasoning rests more on the fact that there are no comparable existing Etruscan sculptures than on scientific testing.

An inscription on the right foreleg marks the bronze as a votive offering to the supreme Etruscan god, Tinia (comparable to Roman Jupiter). The sculpture depicts the Chimera, a mythical beast with the body and head of a lion, a serpent for a tail, and with a goat's head in the middle of its back. The beast plagued the area of Lycia until it was slain by the hero Bellerophon.

The serpent tail was not discovered with the statue; the current tail is an eighteenth century restoration.

Chimera of Arezzo: The bronze statue demonstrates Etruscan artistic techniques and how the liveliness seen in Etruscan terra cotta sculpture is transmitted into the bronze medium.

The bronze statue demonstrates Etruscan artistic techniques and how the liveliness seen in Etruscan terra cotta sculpture is transmitted into the bronze medium . The figure is well modeled and expressive—from its tense muscles, ready pose, and roaring face of the lion and goat. The beast's ribs are clearly visible and a wound on its rump bleeds. The lion's posture—he crouches and looks up—suggests that there may have been an additional figure of Bellerophon to create a votive group. The figure's face and mane is stylized and the patterning is reminiscent of Near Eastern depictions of lions.

Ombra della sera

Produced in the metal-rich town of Velathri (later Volterra), the Ombra della sera (Italian for Evening Shadow) represents a male nude that is nearly two feet high. Archaeologists estimate its date of production to the third century BCE.

In ancient times, Volterra bronze workers were known for their ability to fuse copper ores with tin to form bronze. The body of the sculpture is very elongated, while the scale of its head is naturalistic.

The title Ombra della sera was applied to the sculpture centuries later by a poet who likened its exaggerated form to shadows cast by the setting sun. These unusual proportions lead some experts to believe that the sculpture was intended as a votive offering.

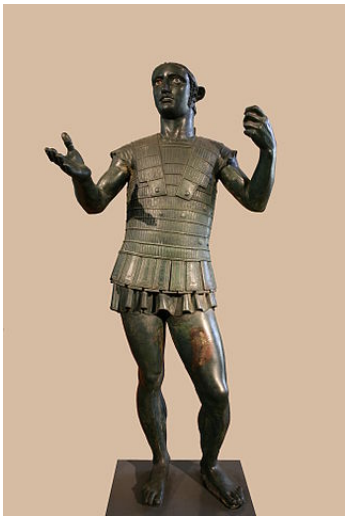
Ombra della Sera: The unusual proportions of this third-century bronze statue lead some experts to believe that the sculpture was intended as a votive offering.

Mars of Todi

The so-called Mars of Todi (late fifth-early fourth century BCE) is a nearly life-size bronze warrior produced as a votive offering, possibly to Laran, the Etrucscan god of war. The figure probably held a patera (libation bowl) in his extended right hand, and a spear in the left.

His helmet is missing, but his body armor is one of the best surviving examples that shows how plate armor from the period appeared. Unlike the Ombra della sera, the Mars of Todi is very naturalistic, complete with a dynamic contrapposto pose and inlaid eyes.

A dedication that combines the Etruscan alphabet and Latin dialect from Umbria (central Italy) is inscribed on the skirt of the breastplate. It translates as, “Ahal Trutitis gave [this as a] gift.” Interestingly, the name of the donor was Celtic in origin, denoting the cosmopolitan nature of the region in ancient times.



Mars of Todi: This bronze statue is a nearly life-size bronze warrior, and was produced as a votive offering, possibly to Laran, the Etrucscan god of war.

Bronze Objects

The Etruscans also used bronze to create small objects, including storage jars, or cistae, and mirrors. Etruscan bronze mirrors were used by women and often deposited as grave goods. These mirrors were highly burnished on one side to reflect an image, and on the other side were decorated with engraved or low-relief casted scenes.

The images depicted were often scenes from Greek mythology, that demonstrate the importation of Greek culture and mythology. Many of these mirrors were inscribed with the deceased’s name, and ritual blessings.

Judgment of Paris: Etruscan bronze mirrors were used by women and often deposited as grave goods. This shows a mirror with an engraving of the Judgment of Paris.

Cistae were also often inscribed and were also decorated with engravings and added bronze elements, such as feet, chains, and decorative handle lids. The cistae were small boxes with lids, much like a pyxis , that was made from bronze and was usually cylindrical.

The handles of the lids were often figures, such as a man or a sphinx , or figural groups. Like the mirrors, the engraved scenes represented images from mythology, but some images also depict scenes from Etruscan history.

Cista with a battle between Etruscans and Gauls on it: The handles of the lids were often figures, like the men on this cista, or a sphinx, or figural groups.

Etruscan Art under the Influence of the Romans

As the Etruscan territories fell under Roman dominance, Etruscan culture and art changed to reflect Roman influence and new cultural values.

Learning Objectives

Describe the changes that appeared in Etruscan art during the Roman period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Funerary imagery changed in Etruscan society as the Etruscans began to encounter violence and conquest by their Roman neighbors. The figures of the underworld demons Charun and Vanth, as well as apotropaic figures, are depicted in tomb paintings and and on sarcophagi during the Etrusco-Roman period.
- The Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena not only depicts the figures of Charun and Vanth, the lid also depicts the deceased as a prosperous and wealthy Etruscan, complete with a scroll listing his accomplishments. The sarcophagus demonstrates the shifting values in Etruscan society.
- The life-size bronze statue of Aule Metele depicts an Etruscan man dressed and behaving as a Roman. The man wears a toga and Roman sandals and is posed in a position of oration, as would be common for a Roman magistrate. The sculpture demonstrates the mixing of Etruscan and Roman styles and culture .

- Temple sculpture also changed during the Roman period, with terra cotta pedimental sculptures adorning at least two temples during the second century BCE. Both sculpture groups display Graeco-Roman naturalism in the depiction of the body. One group wears Roman-style military attire.

Key Terms

- **veristic**: Realistic; true to life.
- **cinerary urn**: A vessel used to hold the ash remains of the cremated deceased.

Etruscan Art under Rome

In 509 BCE, the Etruscan kings of Rome were expelled from the city, and the Roman Republic was established. By the fourth century BCE, Rome was beginning to expand across the Italian peninsula, and the first Etruscan city to fall was Veii in 396 BCE.

Over the following centuries, Etruria was involved in Roman wars, and Etruscan territory was fully conquered by the Romans by the beginning of the first century BCE. While Roman culture drew from its Etruscan roots, borrowing and adapting Etruscan customs, Etruscan society was also influenced by Roman culture.

During this period, art begin to adopt a Roman style and display the permeation of Roman culture and values into Etruscan society. The threat of invasion also led to the common presence of violence, especially in funerary images.

Funerary Art and Sarcophagi

Funerary art , both in tomb paintings and on carved sarcophagi, underwent a noticeable change in subject matter during the Roman period. The figures of Charun and Vanth, demons of the underworld, were depicted with increasing regularity.

Both figures are often depicted with wings, while Charun is often depicted with blue skin to signify putrefying flesh. They also carry torches, used to light the way to the underworld, or sometimes keys to open the door to the underworld, which underline the figures' role as guides between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In the tomb paintings in Tarquinia, the figures of Charun and Vanth can be seen painted in front of or around doorways.

Charun and Vanth: Charun guards the gate to the Underworld, while Vanth guides the deceased to the gate in this fresco from the third century BCE.

While Charun's name is likely a derivative of the Greek underworld ferryman Charon, Vanth appears to be uniquely Etruscan. Due to Charun's menacing associations, theories have attempted to associate Vanth with the avenging Greek Furies. However, her role as a benevolent guide conflicts with this suggestion.

Regardless of Vanth's exact role and origins, the appearance of a less-than-joyous afterlife and menacing figures in Etruscan funerary art does not emerge until after the beginning of the Roman incursions into Etruscan territory. Perhaps Vanth is a gentler apotropaic figure, offering the reassurance of an ally in the afterlife to counteract the trials faced in the face of impending cultural collapse and absorption.

The Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena

Charun and Vanth also appear on stone and terra cotta sarcophagi. Charun is also sometimes depicted with a hammer. On the Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena, two figures of Charun (with hammers but without wings) are depicted on either side of a central figure, most likely Lars Pulena, swinging their hammers at his head. The violent image might have been used as an apotropaic device to ward off evil.

However, in comparison to earlier funerary images, the level of violence seems to mimic the new level of violence in Etruscan society from Roman forces and influence. Two winged representations of Vanth also appear on the sarcophagus, at either end of the frieze .

The lid of the sarcophagus depicts a portrait of the deceased. The man lies alone, wearing a somber expression, unlike the earlier terra cotta Sacophagus of the Spouses.

His face is wrinkled and reflects a Roman republican portrait style, which equates age with wisdom and leadership capabilities. He has a pot belly, signifying his wealth, good life, and robust eating, and he holds a scroll across his lap that is inscribed with a list of his accomplishments.

Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena: The sculpture reflects a Roman republican portrait style, which equates age with wisdom and leadership capabilities. Figures of Charon and Vanth are also on the frieze.

Smaller cinerary urns assumed the shapes of sarcophagi during this period. These urns are topped with images of the deceased lying across the lid, often in Roman dress, with relief-carved scenes of battle, violence, or Charun and Vanth.

The woman who reclines atop the urn wears attire more akin to that of a Roman matron than to the woman on the Sarcophagus of the Spouses. Unlike the Etruscans, who buried their dead in tombs designed to mimic the appearance and comforts of private homes, the Romans practiced cremation and stored the ashes of their deceased in cinerary urns. This shift in Etruscan culture demonstrates the adoption of Roman funerary practices.

Cinerary urn: This shows a terra cotta cinerary urn for a woman. The top of the urn has an image of the deceased lying across the lid, and apotropaic imagery is seen on the urn.

Aule Metele

Aule Metele, also known as The Orator, is a life-size bronze sculpture of an Etrusco-Roman man. The figure is depicted wearing a Roman toga and Roman sandals. He stands in a pose of an orator, with his hand raised to address a crowd. To further emphasize this gesture, the hand is slightly enlarged.

He is clearly depicted as an individual, and an inscription on the hem of his toga in Etruscan names him as Aule Metele. Aule Metele dresses as a Roman magistrate, and his face is a cross between Hellenistic and Roman veristic portraiture.

Aule Metele: Also known as The Orator, this is a life-size bronze sculpture of an Etrusco-Roman man. The sculpture shows a level of individuality through the gaunt cheeks, thin lips, and wrinkled forehead.

The sculpture shows a level of individuality through the gaunt cheeks, thin lips, and wrinkled forehead. As with the sculpture on the Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena, these attributes of age align with the respect afforded to elders in Roman society. While the inscription marks him as an Etruscan, his attire and pose demonstrate the absorption of Roman culture into Etruscan society and the adoption—especially by the ruling class of Etruscans—of Roman civic practices.

Late Temple Sculpture

By the second century BCE, at least two Etruscan temples began to show evidence of the absorption of the Roman culture. Unlike early temples, whose pediments were largely unadorned, the temples in the cities of Luna and Talamone incorporated pedimental sculptures in the style of the Greeks.

Although Roman pediments remained free of sculpture groups, the Roman influence is clearly visible in these terra cotta figures. Whereas pre-Roman temple sculptures were largely stylized like the Apulu of Veii, the pedimental figures from the temples at Luna and Talamone possess the naturalism of Classical and Hellenistic sculpture, both of which were adopted by the Romans.

Unlike Greek pedimental sculpture that depicted male nudes, the figures from the pediment from Talamone, which depicts the fate of the Seven against Thebes, wear Roman battle gear, including short-sleeved skirted armor. By the time the sculpture groups from both temples were produced, their cities were under Roman control.

Pedimental fragments from the Temple of Luna: The pedimental figures from the temples at Luna and Talamone possess the naturalism of Classical and Hellenistic sculpture, both of which were adopted by the Romans.

Pediment from the Temple of Talamone : The first closed pediment in Etruria, this sculpture group depicts the fate of the Seven against Thebes.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 360px-Museo_guarnacci,_ombra_della_sera_01.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5320392%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Etruscan - Cista with Cover Depicting the Conflict of the Gauls and Etruscans - Walters 54133. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Etruscan_-_Cista_with_Cover_Depicting_the_Conflict_of_the_Gauls_and_Etruscans_-_Walters_54133.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mirror Judgement of Paris Louvre Bj1734. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mirror_Judgement_of_Paris_Louvre_Bj1734.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chimera d'arezzo, fi, 04. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chimera_d'arezzo,_fi,_04.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-0_Mars_de_Todi_-_Museo_Gregoriano_Etruscano_(1).jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18381501. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan History. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_history. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Language. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_language%23Specula. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mars of Todi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars_of_Todi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lost-Wax Casting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost-wax_casting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ombra della Sera. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ombra_della_sera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ombra della Sera. **Provided by**: Enhanced Wiki. **Located at**: http://enhancedwiki.altervista.org/?title=Ombra_della_sera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze Mirror. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_mirror. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chimera of Arezzo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chimera_of_Arezzo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cista. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/cista. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pyxis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pyxis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Engrave. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/engrave. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Museo_archeologico_di_Firenze,_frontone_di_Talamone_1.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1464441. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MMA etruscan urn 01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MMA_etruscan_urn_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 632px-Frontone_A_del_grande_tempio_di_luni_con_concilio_degli_dei,_175-150_ac._ca._01.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40178069. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sarcophagus of the magistrate. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarcophagus_of_the_magistrate.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Amazon Web Services. **Located at**: s3.amazonaws.com/figures.boundless.com/50a94216e4b0e5a61a9275c5/tarqunia---charun-and-vanth.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- L'Arringatore. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:L'Arringatore.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Talamone. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Talamone. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Luna (Etruria). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Luna_(Etruria). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Funerary Practices. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_funerary_practices#Disposal_of_the_body. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Roman sarcophagi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Roman_sarcophagi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Orator. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Orator. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Clothing in Ancient Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothing_in_ancient_Rome#Women.27s_clothing. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Charun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Charun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vanth. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanth. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aule Metele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aule_Metele. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arringatore. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arringatore. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Etruscan History. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Etruscan_history. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Sarcophagi Personalization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcophagi_personalization%23Sarcophagus_Of_Lars_Pulena. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cinerary Urn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/cinerary%20urn. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Veristic in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/veristic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 7.2: Later Etruscan Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: The Romans

8.1: The Romans
8.2: The Republic
8.3: The Early Empire
8.4: The Nervan-Antonines
8.5: The Decline of the Roman Empire
8.6: Early Jewish and Christian Art

This page titled 8: The Romans is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.1: The Romans

The Romans

Rome was founded in the mid-eighth century BCE by eight tribes who settled in Etruria and on the famous Seven Hills.

Learning Objectives

Describe the rise of the Roman civilization and the people who made up its population

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The foundation myths of Romulus and Aeneas are the most common means of recounting the founding of Rome , and ancient historians used them to justify their bloody culture . However, the historical record provides a more reliable story. April 21, 753 BCE, is the date given by ancient Roman historians to the founding of Rome. Archaeological research supports this assertion, confirming that the site of Rome was inhabited by the mid-eighth century BCE.
- The Romans were descended from the Italic tribes, mainly the Latins (originally from the Alban Hills to the southeast) and the Sabines (originally from the Apennines to the northeast).
- What was to become Rome originally existed as a collection of autonomous villages atop each of the city's famous Seven Hills. The Palatine Hill, located at the city center, marked the original settlement of the Romans, as well as significant temples and religious festivals. The Quirinal Hill became the home of the Sabines until the sixth century BCE, as well as the sites of significant temples and sanctuaries .

Key Terms

- **Septimontium**: A festival celebrating the first federation of the Seven Hills of Rome.
- **Latial**: Describing a cultural element that deviates from the mainstream Latin culture.
- **wattle-and-daub**: A composite building material used for making walls, in which a woven lattice of wooden strips are coated with a sticky material usually made of some combination of wet soil, clay, sand, animal dung and straw.

Foundation Myths

The Romans relied on two sets of myths to explain their origins: the first story tells the tale of Romulus and Remus, while the second tells the story of Aeneas and the Trojans, who survived the sack of Troy by the Greeks. Oddly, both stories relate the founding of Rome and the origins of its people to brutal murders.

Romulus killed his twin brother, Remus, in a fit of rage, and Aeneas slaughtered his rival Turnus in combat. Roman historians used these mythical episodes as the reason for Rome's own bloody history and periods of civil war. While foundation myths are the most common vehicle through which we learn about the origins of Rome and the Roman people, the actual history is often overlooked.

The Historical Record

Archaeological evidence shows that the area that eventually became Rome has been inhabited continuously for the past 14,000 years. The historical record provides evidence of habitation on and fortification of the Palatine Hill during the eighth century BCE, which supports the date of April 21, 753 BCE, as the date that ancient historians applied to the founding of Rome in association with a festival to Pales, the goddess of shepherds. Given the importance of agriculture to pre-Roman tribes, as well as most ancestors of civilization , it is logical that the Romans would link the celebration of their founding as a city to an agrarian goddess.

Romulus, whose name is believed to be the namesake of Rome, is credited for Rome's founding. He is also credited with establishing the period of monarchical rule. Six kings ruled after him until 509 BCE, when the people rebelled against the last king, Tarquinius Superbus, and established the Republic. Throughout its history, the people—including plebeians , patricians , and senators—were wary of giving one person too much power and feared the tyranny of a king.

Pre-Roman Tribes

The villages that would eventually merge to become Rome were descended from the Italic tribes. The Italic tribes spread throughout the present-day countries of Italy and Sicily. Archaeological evidence and ancient writings provide very little information on how—or whether—pre-Roman tribes across the Italian peninsula interacted.

What is known is that they all belonged to the Indo-European linguistic family, which gave rise to the Romance (Latin-derived) and Germanic languages. What follows is a brief history of two of the eight main tribes that contributed to the founding of Rome: the Latins and the Sabines. Information about a third culture, the Etruscans, is found in Chapter 7.

The Latins

The Latins inhabited the Alban Hills since the second millennium BCE. According to archaeological remains, the Latins were primarily farmers and pastoralists . Approximately at the end of the first millennium BCE, they moved into the valleys and along the Tiber River, which provided better land for agriculture.

Although divided from an early stage into communities that mutated into several independent, and often warring, city-states , the Latins and their neighbors maintained close culturo-religious relations until they were definitively united politically under Rome. These included common festivals and religious sanctuaries.

The Latins appear to have become culturally differentiated from the surrounding Italic tribes from about 1000 BCE onward. From this time, the Latins' material culture shares more in common with the Iron Age Villanovan culture found in Etruria and the Po valley than with their former Osco-Umbrian neighbors.

The Latins thus shared a similar material culture as the Etruscans. However, archaeologists have discerned among the Latins a variant of Villanovan, dubbed the Latial culture.

The most distinctive feature of Latial culture were cinerary urns in the shape of huts . They represent the typical, single-room abodes of the area's peasants, which were made from simple, readily available materials: wattle-and-daub walls and straw roofs supported by wooden posts. The huts remained the main form of Latin housing until the mid-seventh century BCE.

Cinerary urn: This Villanovan urn likely replicates the form that pre-Roman Latin huts assumed before the mid-seventh century BCE.

The Sabines

The Sabines originally inhabited the Apennines and eventually relocated to Latium before the founding of Rome. The Sabines divided into two populations just after the founding of Rome. The division, however it came about, is not legendary.

The population closer to Rome transplanted itself to the new city and united with the pre-existing citizenry to start a new heritage that descended from the Sabines but was also Latinized. The second population remained a mountain tribal state, finally fighting against Rome for its independence along with all the other Italic tribes. After losing, it became assimilated into the Roman Republic.

There is little record of the Sabine language. However, there are some glosses by ancient commentators, and one or two inscriptions have been tentatively identified as Sabine. There are also personal names in use on Latin inscriptions from the Sabine territories, but these are given in Latin form. The existing scholarship classifies Sabine as a member of the Umbrian group of Italic languages and identifies approximately 100 words that are either likely Sabine or that possess Sabine origin.

Pre-Roman tribes: Map showing the locations of the tribes who settled Rome.

The Seven Hills

Before Rome was founded as a city, its people existed in separate settlements atop its famous Seven Hills:

1. The Aventine Hill
2. The Caelian Hill
3. The Capitoline Hill
4. The Esquiline Hill
5. The Palatine Hill
6. The Quirinal Hill
7. The Viminal Hill

Over time, each tribe either united with or was absorbed into the Roman culture.

The Quirinal Hill

Recent studies suggest that the Quirinal Hill was very important to the ancient Romans and their immediate ancestors. It was here that the Sabines originally resided. Its three peaks were united with the three peaks of the Esquiline, as well as villages on the Caelian Hill and Suburra.

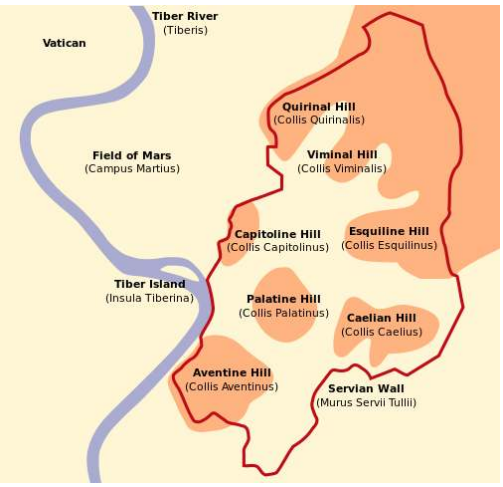
Tombs from the eighth to the seventh century BCE that confirm a likely presence of a Sabine settlement area were discovered on the Quirinal Hill. Some authors consider it possible that the cult of the Capitoline Triad (Jove, Minerva, Juno) could have been celebrated here well before it became associated with the Capitoline Hill. The sanctuary of Flora, an Osco-Sabine goddess, was also at this location. Titus Livius (better known as Livy) writes that the Quirinal Hill, along with the Viminal Hill, became part of Rome in the sixth century BCE.

The Palatine Hill

According to Livy, the Palatine Hill, located at the center of the ancient city, became the home of the original Romans after the Sabines and the Albans moved into the Roman lowlands. Due to its historical and legendary significance, the Palatine Hill became the home of many Roman elites during the Republic and emperors during the Empire.

It was also the site of a temple to Apollo built by Emperor Augustus and the pastoral (and possibly pre-Roman) festival of Lupercalia, which was observed on February 13 through 15 to avert evil spirits, purify the city, and release health and fertility.

Festivals for the Septimontium (meaning of the Seven Hills) on December 11 were previously considered to be related to the foundation of Rome. However, because April 21 is the agreed-upon date of the city's founding, it has recently been argued that Septimontium celebrated the first federations among the Seven Hills. A similar federation was celebrated by the Latins at Cave or Monte Cavo.



The Seven Hills of Rome: A schematic map of Rome showing the Seven Hills.

Roman Society

Ancient Roman society was based on class-based and political structures, as well as by religious practices.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Roman society

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Roman society consisted of several divisions of social classes that held varying degrees of power and prestige. This structure was echoed on a familial level under the power of the father, or pater familias .
- In matters of government, the Senate remained a fixture from the founding of Rome to the collapse of the Empire, although its power and influence grew and weakened over time.
- As Rome became a global power, its government consisted of levels on the colonial and municipal levels, as well as on the central level in the imperial capital .
- The Roman pantheon of gods is comparable to its Greek counterparts, who Romans worshiped and sent prayers to throughout their lives. The Romans were flexible in their worship and absorbed foreign gods into their pantheon.
- In the Imperial period, an imperial cult developed to worship the emperors who were deified upon their death.

Key Terms

- **Pontifex Maximus**: The official head, or chief priest, of the Roman state's religion. In Imperial Rome this title and office was given to the Emperor.
- **plebeian**: A free Roman citizen who was not a patrician.
- **equite**: The lower of the two aristocratic classes of ancient Rome, ranking below the patricians.
- **pater familias**: The father, or (male) head of household.
- **insula**: An apartment building that housed most of the urban citizen population of ancient Rome, including ordinary people of lower- or middle-class status (the plebians) and all but the wealthiest from the upper-middle class (the equites).
- **patrician**: A member of a hereditary ruling-class family.

Social Structure

Life in ancient Rome centered around the capital city with its fora, temples, theaters, baths, gymnasia, brothels, and other forms of culture and entertainment. Private housing ranged from elegant urban palaces and country villas for the social elites to crowded insulae (apartment buildings) for the majority of the population.

The large urban population required an endless supply of food, which was a complex logistical task. Area farms provided produce, while animal-derived products were considered luxuries. The aqueducts brought water to urban centers, and wine and oil were imported from Hispania (Spain and Portugal), Gaul (France and Belgium), and Africa.

Highly efficient technology allowed for frequent commerce among the provinces. While the population within the city of Rome might have exceeded one million, most Romans lived in rural areas, each with an average population of 10,000 inhabitants.

Roman society consisted of patricians , equites (equestrians, or knights), plebeians , and slaves. All categories except slaves enjoyed the status of citizenship.

In the beginning of the Roman republic, plebeians could neither intermarry with patricians or hold elite status, but this changed by the Late Republic, when the plebeian-born Octavian rose to elite status and eventually became the first emperor. Over time, legislation was passed to protect the lives and health of slaves.

Although many prostitutes were slaves, for instance, the bill of sale for some slaves stipulated that they could not be used for commercial prostitution. Slaves could become freedmen—and thus citizens—if their owners freed them or if they purchased their freedom by paying their owners. Free-born women were considered citizens, although they could neither vote nor hold political office.

Pater Familias

Within the household, the pater familias was the seat of authority, possessing power over his wife, the other women who bore his sons, his children, his nephews, his slaves, and the freedmen to whom he granted freedom. His power extended to the point of disposing of his dependents and their good, as well as having them put to death if he chose.

In private and public life, Romans were guided by the mos maiorum, an unwritten code from which the ancient Romans derived their social norms that affected all aspects of life in ancient Rome.

Roman family: Relief of a Roman family with the child in the middle, the father on the left, and the mother on the right.

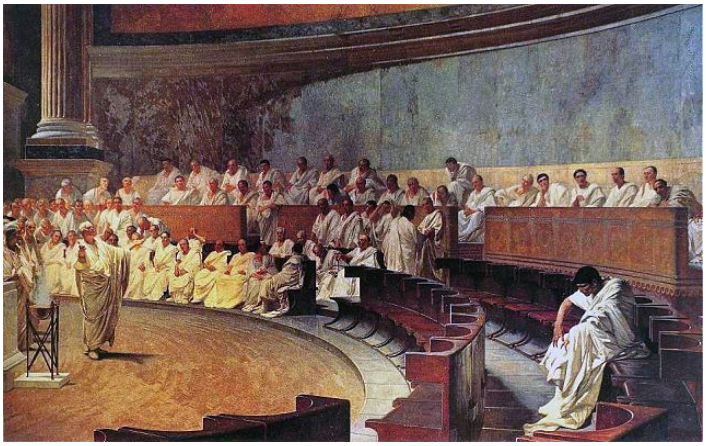
Government

Over the course of its history, Rome existed as a kingdom (hereditary monarchy), a republic (in which leaders were elected), and an empire (a kingdom encompassing a wider swath of territory). From the establishment of the city in 753 BCE to the fall of the empire in 476 CE, the Senate was a fixture in the political culture of Rome, although the power it exerted did not remain constant.

During the days of the kingdom, it was little more than an advisory council to the king. Over the course of the Republic, the Senate reached the height of its power, with old-age becoming a symbol of prestige, as only elders could serve as senators. However the late Republic witnessed the beginning of its decline. After Augustus ended the Republic to form the Empire, the Senate lost much of its power, and with the reforms of Diocletian in the third century CE, it became irrelevant.

As Rome grew as a global power, its government was subdivided into colonial and municipal levels. Colonies were modeled closely on the Roman constitution, with roles being defined for magistrates, council, and assemblies. Colonists enjoyed full Roman citizenship and were thus extensions of Rome itself.

The second most prestigious class of cities was the municipium (a town or city). Municipia were originally communities of non-citizens among Rome's Italic allies. Later,Roman citizenship was awarded to all Italy, with the result that a municipium was effectively now a community of citizens. The category was also used in the provinces to describe cities that used Roman law but were not colonies.



The Roman Senate: A nineteenth-century fresco in the Palazzo Madama in Rome, depicting a sitting of the Roman Senate in which the senator Cicero attacks the senator Catiline.

Religion

The Roman people considered themselves to be very religious. Religious beliefs and practices helped establish stability and social order among the Romans during the reign of Romulus and the period of the legendary kings. Some of the highest religious offices, such as the Pontifex Maximus , the head of the state's religion—which eventually became one of the titles of the emperor—were sought-after political positions.

Women who became Vestal Virgins served the goddess of the hearth, Vesta, and received a high degree of autonomy within the state, including rights that other women would never receive.

The Roman pantheon corresponded to the Etruscan and Greek deities . Jupiter was considered the most powerful and important of all the Gods.

In nearly every Roman city, a central temple known as the Capitolia that was dedicated to the supreme triad of deities: Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (Zeus, Hera, and Athena). Small household gods, known as Lares, were also popular.

Each family claimed their own set of personal gods and laraium, or shines to the Lares, are found not only in houses but also at street corners, on roads, or for a city neighborhood.

Lararium: A fresco and stucco lararium from the House of the Vettii.

Capitoline Triad: Juno, Jupiter, and Minerva made up the Capitoline Triad. They often shared a temple, known as the Capitolia, in the center of a Roman city. This photo is taken in the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia, Palestrina, Italy.

Roman religious practice often centered around prayers, vows, oaths, and sacrifice . Many Romans looked to the gods for protection and would complete a promise sacrifice or offering as thanks when their wishes were fulfilled. The Romans were not exclusive in their religious practices and easily participated in numerous rituals for different gods. Furthermore, the Romans readily absorbed foreign gods and cults into their pantheon.

With the rise of imperial rule, the emperors were considered gods, and temples were built to many emperors upon their death. Their family members could also be deified, and the household gods of the emperor's family were also incorporated into Roman worship.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 470px-Italic_-_Urn_in_the_Shape_of_a_Hut_and_a_Door_-_Walters_482312.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18837689. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Latium_-5th_Century_map-en.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14382517%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 503px-Seven_Hills_of_Rome.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3909635. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sabines. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabines. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Founding of Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_of_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Latins (Italic Tribe). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Latins_(Italic_tribe). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Seven Hills of Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_hills_of_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wattle-and-Daub. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wattle_and_daub. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Quirinal Hill. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Quirinal_Hill. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- List of Ancient Peoples of Italy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ancient_peoples_of_Italy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Titus Livius (Livy), The History of Rome, Book 1. **Provided by**: Tufts University. **Located at**: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0151%3Abook%3D1. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palatine Hill. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palatine_Hill. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Maccari-Cicero.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1224785. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Capitoline Triad of Guidonia 1. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Capitoline_Triad_of_Guidonia_1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Ehepaar_mit_Kind.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8264858%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vettii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vettii.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mos Maiorum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mos_maiorum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Imperial Cult (Ancient Rome). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult_(Ancient_Rome). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Ancient Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_ancient_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Equites. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Equites. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Women in Ancient Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_ancient_Rome%23Religious_life. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Senate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Social Class in Ancient Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class_in_ancient_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Patrician (Ancient Rome). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrician_(ancient_Rome). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Plebs. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Plebs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Insula (Building). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Insula_(building). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Local Government (Ancient Roman). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_(ancient_Roman). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lares. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lares. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Capitoline Triad. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitoline_Triad. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Religion in Ancient Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pontifex Maximus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/pontifex%20maximus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 8.1: The Romans is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.2: The Republic

Roman Sculpture under the Republic

During the Roman Republic, members of all social classes used a variety of sculptural techniques to promote their distinguished social statuses.

Learning Objectives

Describe the defining characteristics of sculpture during the Roman Republic

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Continuous narration arose during the Republic as a means of telling a story from beginning to end in a visual form . Art patrons used it on public monuments to celebrate their status in society.
- The patronage of public sculpture extended to freedmen, as seen in the massive and uniquely decorated tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker.
- Veristic portraiture depicts the subject in hyper- realism , wrinkles and individual facial characteristics are carefully formed in these images.
- Portraits of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar set precedents for future imperial portraiture by quoting iconographic characteristics and introducing a likeness of the living imperator on coins.
- Death masks provided a means for a family to remember their ancestors as well as to remind others of the illustriousness of their ancestry.

Key Terms

- **verism**: The style of portraiture favored during the Roman Republic in which the subjects were portrayed in a super-realistic likeness; from the Latin word for true.
- **continuous narration**: A visual art technique that illustrates multiple scenes of a story within a single frame and without any separation between scenes and actions.
- **Imperator**: A Latin word meaning general or ruler; a title given to triumphant generals during the Republic.

Roman Art in the Republic

Early Roman art was influenced by the art of Greece and that of the neighboring Etruscans, themselves greatly influenced by their Greek trading partners. As the expanding Roman Republic began to conquer Greek territory, its official sculpture became largely an extension of the Hellenistic style , with its departure from the idealized body and flair for the dramatic. This is partly due to the large number of Greek sculptors working within Roman territory.

However, Roman sculpture during the Republic departed from the Greek traditions in several ways.

- It was the first to feature a new technique called continuous narration.
- Commoners, including freedmen, could commission public art and use it to cast their professions in a positive light.
- Portraiture throughout the Republic celebrated old age with its verism .
- In the closing decades of the Republic, Julius Caesar counteracted traditional propriety by becoming the first living person to place his own portrait on a coin.

In the examples that follow, the patrons use these techniques to promote their status in society.

The Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus

Despite its most common title, the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus (late second century BCE) was more likely a base intended to support cult statues in the cella of a Temple of Neptune (Poseidon) located in Rome on the Field of Mars. The frieze is the second oldest Roman bas- relief currently known.

Domitius Ahenobarbus, a naval general, likely commissioned the altar and the temple in gratitude of a naval victory between 129 and 128 BCE. The reliefs combine mythology and contemporary civic life.

One panel of the altar depicts the census, a uniquely Roman event of contemporary civic life. It is one of the earliest reliefs sculpted in continuous narration, in which the viewer reads from left to right the recording of the census, the purification of the army before the altar of Mars, and the levy of the soldiers.

Altar of Domitius Ahenobarb: This panel of the altar depicts the census, a uniquely Roman event of contemporary civic life.

The other three panels depict the mythological wedding of Neptune and Amphitrite. At the center of his scene, Neptune and Amphitrite are seated in a chariot drawn by two Tritons (messengers of the sea) who dance to music. They are accompanied by a multitude of fantastic creatures, Tritons, and Nereides (sea nymphs) who form a retinue for the wedding couple, which, like the census scene, can be read from left to right.

At the left, a Nereid riding on a sea-bull carries a present. Next, Amphitrite's mother Doris advances towards the couple, mounted on a hippocampus (literally, a sea horse) and holding wedding torches in each hand to light the procession's way. Eros hovers behind her. Behind the wedding couple, a Nereid riding a hippocampus carries another present.

Altar of Domitius Ahenobarb: The other three panels of the altar depict the mythological wedding of Neptune and Amphitrite.

Tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker

The patronage of public sculpture was not limited to the ruling classes during the Republic. The tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker (c. 50–20 BCE) is one of the largest and best-preserved freedman funerary monuments in Rome. Its sculpted frieze is a classic example of the plebeian style in Roman sculpture.

The deceased built the tomb for himself and perhaps his wife Atistia in the final decades of the Republic. While the tomb's inscription lacks an L to denote the status of a freedman, the tripartite name of the deceased follows the pattern of names given to and adopted by former slaves.

The tomb, approximately 33 feet tall, commemorates the deceased and his profession. It three main components are a frieze at the top and the cylindrical niches (probably symbolic of a kneading machine or grain measuring vessels) below it.

The surviving text of the inscription translates as "This is the monument of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces, baker, contractor, public servant." The frieze represents various stages in the baking of bread in continuous narration.

Although time-worn, the naturalistic depiction of human and animal bodies in a variety of poses is still evident. This record of each stage in a mundane process demonstrates the sense of pride the deceased must have had in his profession. Because the wearing of togas was not conducive to manual labor, the simple clothing on the figures marks them as plebeians, or commoners.

The Tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker: The frieze represents various stages in the baking of bread in continuous narration.

Portraiture

Roman portraiture during the Republic is identified by its considerable realism, known as veristic portraiture. Verism refers to a hyper-realistic portrayal of the subject's facial characteristics. The style originated from Hellenistic Greece; however, its use in the Roman Republic is due to Roman values , customs, and political life.

As with other forms of Roman art, portraiture borrowed certain details from Greek art but adapted these to their own needs. Veristic images often show their male subjects with receding hairlines, deep winkles, and even with warts. While the faces of the portraits often display incredible detail and likeness, the subjects' bodies are idealized and do not correspond to the age shown in the face.

Portrait of a Roman General: When created as full-length sculptures, the veristic portrait busts appear to have been paired with idealized (mass-produced?) bodies that create a sense of disunity.

Bust of an old man: Verism refers to a hyper-realistic portrayal of the subject's facial characteristics, such as the wrinkles on this man's face.

The popularity and usefulness of verism appears to derive from the need to have a recognizable image. Veristic portrait busts provided a means of reminding people of distinguished ancestors or of displaying one's power, wisdom, experience, and authority. Statues were often erected of generals and elected officials in public forums—and a veristic image ensured that a passerby would recognize the person when they actually saw them.

The Late Republic

The use of veristic portraiture began to diminish in the first century BCE. During this time, civil wars threatened the empire, and individual men began to gain more power. The portraits of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, two political rivals who were also the most powerful generals in the Republic, began to change the style of the portraits and their use.

The portraits of Pompey are not fully idealized, nor were they created in the same veristic style of Republican senators. Pompey borrowed a specific parting and curl of his hair from Alexander the Great . This similarity served to link Pompey visually with the likeness of Alexander and to remind people that he possessed similar characteristics and qualities.

Marble bust of Pompey the Great: Portraits of Pompey combine a degree of verism with an idealized hairstyle reminiscent of Alexander the Great.

The portraits of Julius Caesar are more veristic than those of Pompey. Despite staying closer to stylistic convention, Caesar was the first man to mint coins with his own likeness printed on them. In the decades prior to this, it had become increasingly common to place an illustrious ancestor on a coin, but putting a living person—especially oneself—on a coin departed from Roman propriety. By circulating coins issued with his image, Caesar directly showed the people that they were indebted to him for their own prosperity and therefore should support his political pursuits.

Julius Caesar portrait: A portrait of Julius Caesar on a denarius. On the reverse side stands Venus Victix holding a winged Victory.

Death Masks

The creation and use of death masks demonstrate Romans' veneration of their ancestors. These masks were created from molds taken of a person at the time of his or her death. Made of wax, bronze , marble, and terra cotta , death masks were kept by families and displayed in the atrium of their homes.

Visitors and clients who entered the home would have been reminded of the family's ancestry and the honorable qualities of their ancestors. Such displays served to bolster the reputation and credibility of the family.

Death masks were also worn and paraded through the streets during funeral procession. Again, this served not only a memorial for the dead, but also to link the living members of a family to their illustrious ancestors in the eyes of the spectator.

Roman Architecture under the Republic

Roman architecture relies heavily on the use of concrete and the arch to create unique interior spaces and architectural forms.

Learning Objectives

Explain the importance of both concrete and the arch in Roman architecture.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Roman architecture began as an imitation of the Classical Greek style but eventually grew into its own style with technological advances and modifications on traditional Greek elements. Roman temple design is based on a mixed use of Etruscan and Greek models. They are typically strictly frontal, on a high podium with a flight of stairs, and have a deep, colonnaded portico in front of the cella .
- Concrete is an essential building material in Roman architecture. It is lightweight, strong, and durable and could even be used underwater.
- Most Roman buildings were constructed with concrete and brick and then faced in stucco , expensive stone, or marble.
- The arch is a highly significant architectural shape in Roman architecture, often employed to allow for wider openings in structures. Arches can be used together to create vaults (barrel and groin) and domes , as well as to create unique interior spaces .

Key Terms

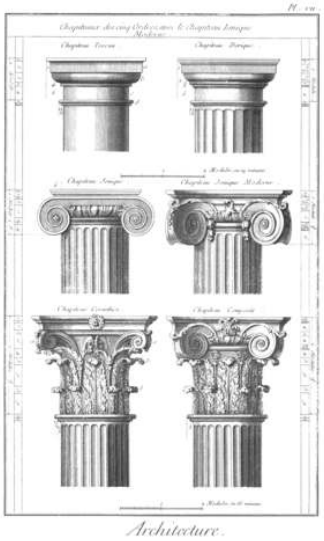
- **pozzolana**: A type of volcanic ash used for mortar or for cement that sets under water.
- **psuedoperipteral**: A building with free standing columns in the front and engaged columns along the peripheral walls; this style is often used on Roman temples.
- **barrel vault**: A simple roof having a curved, often semicircular, cross section used to span large distances in railway stations, churches, etc., and usually supported on columns.
- **exedra**: A semicircular recess, with stone benches, used as a place for discussion.
- **cella**: The inner chamber of a temple where the cult image or statue is kept.

Roman Architecture

Roman architecture began as an imitation of Classical Greek architecture but eventually evolved into a new style. Unfortunately, almost no early Republican buildings remain intact. The earliest substantial remains date to approximately 100 BCE.

Innovations such as improvements to the round arch and barrel vault , as well as the inventions of concrete and the true hemispherical dome, allowed Roman architecture to become more versatile than its Greek predecessors. While the Romans were reluctant to abandon classical motifs , they modified their temple designs by abandoning pedimental sculptures, altering the traditional Greek peripteral colonnades , and opting for central exterior stairways.

Likewise, although Roman architects did not abandon traditional column orders, they did modify them with the Tuscan, Roman Ionic, and Composite orders. This diagram shows the Greek orders on the left and their Roman modifications on the right.



Greek and Roman column orders: From top to bottom: Doric and Tuscan, Ionic and Roman Ionic (scrolls on all four corners), Corinthian and Composite.

Roman Temples

Most Roman temples derived from Etruscan prototypes. Like Etruscan temples, Roman temples are frontal with stairs that lead up to a podium, and a deep portico filled with columns. They are also usually rectilinear , and the interiors consist of at least one cella that contained a cult statue.

If multiple gods were worshiped in one temple, each god would have its own cella and cult image. For example, Capitolia—the temples dedicated to the Capitoline Triad—would always be built with three cellae, one for each god of the triad: Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.

The Temple of Portunus : A typical Roman Republican temple. Rome, c. 75 BCE.

Roman temples were typically made of brick and concrete and then faced in either marble or stucco. Engaged columns (columns that protrude from walls like reliefs) adorn the exteriors of the temples. This creates an effect of columns completely surrounding a cella, an effect known as psuedoperipteral . The altar, used for sacrifices and offerings , always stood outside in front of the temple.

While most Roman temples followed this typical plan, some were dramatically different. At times, the Romans erected round temples that imitated the Greek tholos . Examples can be found in the Temple of Hercules Victor (late second century BCE), in the Forum Boarium in Rome . The temple consists a circular cella within a concentric ring of 20 Corinthian columns. Like its Etruscan predecessors, the temple rests on a tufa foundation. Its original roof and architrave are now lost.

Temple of Hercules Victor: A Roman modification of a Greek tholos. Rome, from the late second century BCE.

Concrete

The Romans perfected the recipe for concrete during the third century BCE by mixing together water, lime, and pozzolana , volcanic ash mined from the countryside surrounding Mt. Vesuvius. Concrete became the primary building material for the Romans, and it is largely the reason that they were such successful builders.

Most Roman buildings were built with concrete and brick that was then covered in façade of stucco, expensive stone, or marble. Concrete was a cheaper and lighter material than most other stones used for construction. This helped the Romans build structures that were taller, more complicated, and quicker to build than any previous ones.

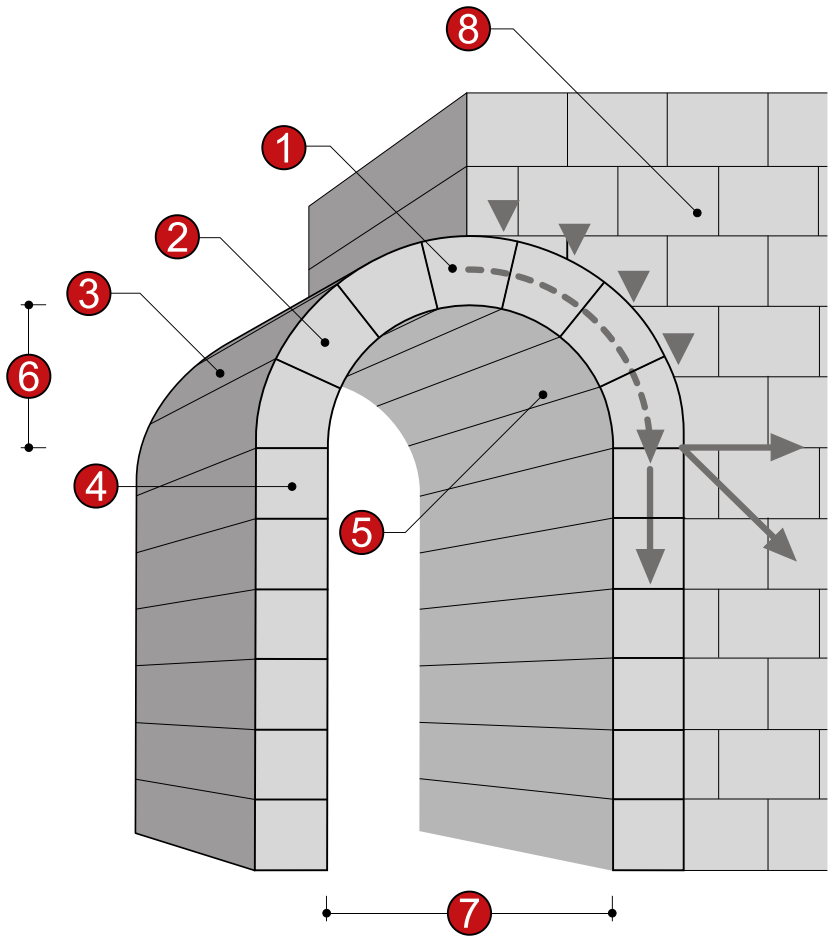
Wall of a tomb on the Via Appia, Rome: The ruins show the internal core of the building, made in Roman concrete.

Once dried, concrete was also extremely strong, yet flexible enough to remain standing during moderate seismic activity. The Romans were even able to use concrete underwater, allowing them build harbors and breakers for their ports. The ruins of a tomb on the Via Appia (the most famous thoroughfare through ancient Rome) expose the stones and aggregate that the Romans used to mix concrete.

Arches, Vaults, and Domes

The Romans effectively combined concrete and the structural shape of the arch. These two elements became the foundations for most Roman structures. Arches can bear immense weight, as they are designed to redistribute weight from the top, to its sides, and down into the ground . While the Romans did not invent the arch, they were the first culture to manipulate it and rely on its shape.

An arch is a pure compression form . It can span a large area by resolving forces into compressive stresses (pushing downward) that, in turn, eliminate tensile stresses (pushing outward). As the forces in the arch are carried to the ground, the arch will push outward at the base (called thrust). As the height of the arch decreases, the outward thrust increases. In order to maintain arch action and prevent the arch from collapsing, the thrust needs to be restrained, either with internal ties or external bracing, such as abutments (labeled 8 on the diagram below).



Schematic illustration of an arch: This diagram illustrates the structural support of an arch extended into a barrel vault. The dotted line extending downward from the keystone (1) shows the strength of the arch directing compressive stresses (represented by the downward-pointing arrows outside the arch) safely to the ground. Meanwhile, tensile stress (represented by the horizontal and diagonal-facing arrows) is contained by the surrounding wall.

The arch is a shape that can be manipulated into a variety of forms that create unique architectural spaces. Multiple arches can be used together to create a vault. The simplest type is known as a barrel vault.

Barrel vaults consist of a line of arches in a row that create the shape of a tunnel. When two barrel vaults intersect at right angles, they create a groin vault . These are easily identified by the x-shape they create in the ceiling of the vault. Furthermore, because of the direction, the thrust is concentrated along this x-shape, so only the corners of a groin vault need to be grounded. This allows an architect or engineer to manipulate the space below the groin vault in a variety of ways.

Arches and vaults can be stacked and intersected with each other in a multitude of ways. One of the most important forms that they can create is the dome. This is essentially an arch that is rotated around a single point to create a large hemispherical vault. The largest dome constructed during the Republic was on the Temple of Echo at Baiae, named for its remarkable acoustic properties.

Temple of Echo at Baiae: The dome on Temple of Echo at Baiae creates the building's remarkable acoustic properties.

Arches and concrete are found in many iconic Roman structures. The Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia (c. 120 BCE) at Palestrina, Italy is a massive temple structure built into the hillside in a series of terraces, exedras , and porticoes. Concrete was used as the primary building material and barrel vaults provide structural support, both as a terracing method for the hill and in creating interesting architectural spaces for the sanctuary.

Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia (scale model): Concrete was used as the primary building material and barrel vaults provide structural support, both as a terracing method for the hill and in creating interesting architectural spaces for the sanctuary.

Roman aqueducts are another iconic use of the arch. The arches that make up an aqueduct provided support without requiring the amount of building material necessary for arches supported by solid walls. The Aqua Marcia (144–140 BCE) was the longest of the eleven aqueducts that served the city of Rome during the Republic. It supplied water to the Viminal Hill in the north of Rome, and from there to the Caelian, Aventine, Palatine, and Capitoline Hills. Where the Aqua Marcia had contact with water, it was coated with a waterproof mortar.

Aqua Marcia: These are some ruins from the aquaduct near Tivoli, Italy, c. 144–140 BCE.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Iulius Caesar denarius 44 BC 851830. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iulius_Caesar_denarius_44_BC_851830.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pompejus. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompejus.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Old man vatican pushkin01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_man_vatican_pushkin01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- General Tivoli Museo nazionale romano. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Tivoli_Museo_nazionale_romano.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Sea_thiasos_Nereis_Glyptothek_Munich_239_front.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29147157. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Tomb_of_Eurysaces_the_Baker_-_details.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37589338. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Altar-of-Domitius-Ahenobarb.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6209966. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Altar_of_Domitius_Ahenobarbus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Triton (Mythology). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Triton_(mythology). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Republican Portraiture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republican_portraiture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_sculpture%23Portraiture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nereid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nereid. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Narrative Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_art#Continuous_narrative. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Clothing in Ancient Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothing_in_ancient_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hippocampus (Mythology). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocampus_(mythology). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Roman Portraiture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_portraiture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Death Mask. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_mask. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Verism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Verism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Imperator. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperator. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Verism in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/verism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 628px-Temple_of_Hercules_(Rome).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50377899. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 596px-OpusCaementiciumViaAppiaAntica.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=268284. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Temple_of_echo_Baiae.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2505461. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Tivoli_Acquedotto_Arci_0511-03.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=502305. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Arch illustration. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arch_illustration.svg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Roma-tempio di portunus. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma-tempio_di_portunus.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-PalestrinaMuseoPlasticoSantuario.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15661592. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 305px-Classical_orders_from_the_Encyclopedie.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47982. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Temple of Hercules Victor. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Hercules_Victor. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aqua Marcia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aqua_Marcia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baiae. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baiae#Ruins. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sanctuaire de la Fortuna Primigenia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanctuaire_de_la_Fortuna_Primigenia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cella. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cella%23Etruscan_temples. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vault (architecture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vault_(architecture)%23Vault_types. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arch. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barrel Vault. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barrel_vault. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Concrete. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_concrete. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pozzolana. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pozzolana. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Concrete. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Concrete. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pseudoperipteral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudoperipteral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Groin Vault. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Groin_vault. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Palestrina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestrina%23Sanctuary_of_Fortuna_Primigenia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Engineering. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_engineering. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pozzolana. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pozzolana. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Exedra. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/exedra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Psuedoperipteral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/psuedoperipteral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 8.2: The Republic is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.3: The Early Empire

Imperial Sculpture in the Early Roman Empire

Augustan art served a vital visual means to promote the legitimacy of Augustus' power, and the techniques he employed were incorporated into the propaganda of later emperors.

Learning Objectives

Describe the elements of propaganda in Augustan art and in the art commissioned by later emperors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The intricate and deliberate iconography of Ara Pacis Augustae promotes religious piety, fertility, and the flourishing of the empire under Augustus.
- Augustus abandoned the veristic portraiture of the Roman Republic in favor of creating an image of a forever-youthful emperor. His imperial portraits often promoted his piety and military accomplishments.
- Augustus's successor, Tiberius, and the penultimate Julio-Claudian emperor Claudius, employed the attributes of eternal youthfulness and prowess in their political portraiture as a measure of political promotion.

Key Terms

- **meander**: A decorative border constructed from a continuous line, shaped into a repeated motif.
- **lictors**: The bodyguards for a magistrate in the Republican Rome and emperors during Imperial Rome. They carried fasces, a bundle of wooden rods with an axe, which symbolized the power of the magistrate or emperor.
- **cuirass**: A metal breastplate that serves as armor.
- **pomerium**: The sacred boundary around a city that marked the city's urban, legal, and religious limits. No armies were allowed within this boundary.
- **register**: A vertical level in a work that consists of several levels, especially where the levels are clearly separated by lines.

Augustus

During his reign, Augustus enacted an effective propaganda campaign to promote the legitimacy of his rule as well as to encourage moral and civic ideals among the Roman populace.

Augustan sculpture contains the rich iconography of Augustus's reign with its strong themes of legitimacy, stability, fertility, prosperity, and religious piety. The visual motifs employed within this iconography became the standards for imperial art.

Ara Pacis Augustae

The Ara Pacis Augustae, or Altar of Augustan Peace, is one of the best examples of Augustan artistic propaganda. Not only does it demonstrate a new moral code promoted by Augustus, it also established imperial iconography. It was commissioned by the Senate in 13 BCE to honor the peace and bounty established by Augustus following his return from Hispania (Spain) and Gaul; it was consecrated on January 30, 9 BCE.

The marble altar was erected just outside the boundary of the pomerium to the north of the city along the Via Flaminia on the Campus Martius. The actual u-shaped altar sits atop a podium inside a square wall that demarcates the precinct's sacred space .

Ara Pacis Augustae: The actual u-shaped altar sits atop a podium inside a square wall that demarcates the precinct's sacred space.

The north and south walls depict a procession of life-sized figures on the upper register . These figures include men, women, children, priests, lictors , and identifiable members of the political elite during the Augustan age. The elite include Augustus, his wife Livia, his son-in-law Marcus Agrippa (who died in 12 BCE), and Tiberius, Augustus's adopted son and successor who would marry the emperor's widowed daughter in 11 BCE. While the altar as a whole celebrates the Augustus as a peacemaker, this scene promotes him as a pious family man.

Ara Pacis Augustae: A detail from the processional scene on the south wall.

Imperial Portraiture

Augustus very carefully controlled his imperial portrait. Abandoning the veristic style of the Republican period, his portraits always showed him as an idealized young man. These portraits linked him to divinities and heroes, both mythical and historical.

He is often shown with an identifiable cowlick that was originally shown on the portraits of Alexander the Great . His lack of shoes signifies his supposed humbleness despite the great power he possessed. Two portraits of him, one as Pontifex Maximus and the other as Imperator , depict two different personae of the emperor.

Augustus's portrait as Pontifex Maximus shows him attired with a toga over his ever-youthful head, an attribute that serves to remind viewers of his own extreme piety to the gods.

Augustus: Portrayed as Pontifex Maximus.

The Augustus of Primaporta shows the influence of both Roman and Classical Greek works, including the Spear Bearer by Polykleitos and the Etruscan bronze Aule Metele. Assuming the role of imperator, Augustus wears military grab in a pose known as adlucotio, addressing his troops. Despite his poor health, which left him with a frail body, he appears healthy and muscular.

Cupid rides a dolphin at Augustus' feet, a symbol of his divine ancestry. Cupid is the son of Venus, as was Aeneas, the legendary ancestor of the Roman people. The Julian family traced their ancestry back to Aeneas and, therefore, consider themselves

descendants of Venus.

As Caesar's nephew and adopted son, this use of iconography allows Augustus to remind viewers of his divine lineage. In addition to adopting the body language and attire of a general, the relief on the cuirass shows one of Augustus' greatest victories—the return of the Parthian standards.

During the civil wars, a legion's standards were lost when the legion was defeated by the Parthians . In a great feat of diplomacy, and curiously not military action, Augustus was able to negotiate the return of the standards to the legion and to Rome . Additional figures on the cuirass personify Roman gods and the arrival of Augustan peace.

Augustus of Primaporta: The Augustus of Primaporta statue shows the influence of both Roman and Classical Greek works. Cupid rides a dolphin at Augustus' feet, a symbol of his divine ancestry.

The Legacy of Augustan Sculpture

Upon the death of Augustus, Tiberius (14–37 CE) assumed the title of emperor and Pontifex Maximus of Rome. Like his father-in-law, Tiberius maintained a youthful appearance in his portraiture in sculpture.

A general in his pre-imperial career, Tiberius appears in a sculpture very similar to the Augustus of Primaporta. He wears military attire and stands erect in a dynamic contrapposto pose with his arm raised. Although he wears boots, which would appear to contradict the suggestion of humbleness seen in full-length sculptures of Augustus, his plain cuirass and the absence of religious iconography suggest a competent leader who does not promote his accomplishments or divine ancestry.

Full-length sculpture of Tiberius in military garb: Tiberius' plain cuirass and the absence of religious iconography suggest a competent leader who does not promote his accomplishments or divine ancestry.

Like Augustus, who suffered from poor health, Claudius, who succeeded Caligula in 41 CE, was also infirm. In addition to health issues, Claudius lacked experience as a leader but quickly overcame this shortcoming as emperor.

During his reign, Rome annexed the province of Britannia (present-day England and Wales) and witnessed the construction of new roads and aqueducts . Despite these achievements, Claudius's opponents still saw him as vulnerable, a situation that forced him to shore up his position almost constantly, resulting in the deaths of many senators. Perhaps this need to prove his competency in his role prompted him to commission a sculpture of himself as Jupiter, a sculpture that also bears striking similarities to the Augustus of Primaporta.

He continues the standard of the eternally youthful and healthy emperor begun by Augustus. His face and body are idealized. Like his predecessor, Claudius appears barefoot in a gesture of humility balanced with a symbol of divinity, in this case, an eagle to symbolize Jupiter. He wears a laurel crown as a metaphor of victory. While the positions of his arms and hand are similar to those of Augustus, Claudius holds a bowl (an offering to signify his piety) in one hand and a scepter-like object (to signify his power) in the other.

Claudius as Jupiter: Claudius holds a bowl (an offering to signify his piety) in one hand and a scepter-like object (to signify his power) in the other.

Architecture of the Early Roman Empire

The Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties of the early Roman Empire oversaw some of the best-known building projects of the era.

Learning Objectives

Identify the prominent architectural accomplishments of the early Roman Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The first Roman emperor, Augustus, was said to have transformed Rome from a city of brick to one of marble. One of the projects of his reign was the rebuilding of the Basilica Julia, named in honor of his adopted father Julius Caesar. Elements of its design would later appear on the Colosseum.
- Nero built the Domus Aurea on appropriated land following the devastating fire in 64 CE. The palatial structure was lavishly decorated and the Octagonal Hall demonstrates the architectural innovations that are available to architects and engineers when working with concrete.
- Titus, Vespasian's eldest son, is best known for suppressing the Jewish rebellion and his conquest over Judea in 70 CE. This is celebrated in the Arch of Titus that was erected by his brother after Titus' death. Titus ruled from 79—81 CE.
- The Flavian Amphitheatre , also known as the Colosseum, was constructed under the Flavians on land in Rome owned by Nero. This shrewd political act not only returned Roman land back to the people but also provided a means of entertaining the masses of the city for centuries to come.

Key Terms

- **menorah**: A holy candelabrum with seven branches used in the Temple of Jerusalem; or a candelabrum with nine branches used in Jewish worship on Hanukkah.
- **damnatio memoriae**: A phrase from Latin meaning the condemnation of one's memory, a dishonor given by the Roman Senate to particularly hated Emperors. It attempted to erase all memory and history of the person by removing their name from all documents and destroying all their portraits.
- **spandrel**: The space (often triangular) between the outer curve of an arch (the extrados) and a straight-sided figure that bounds it, or the space between two contiguous arches and a straight feature above them.

- **grotesque**: Originating from the Italian word for cave, this is an extravagant style of ancient Roman painting found on the walls of basements in ancient ruins.
- **basilica**: A public building where courts and other official and public functions were held. Essentially, a Roman town hall.
- **apotheosis**: The fact or action of becoming or making into a god; deification.

Early Roman Empire Architecture

The early Roman Empire consisted of two dynasties : the Julio-Claudians (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero) and the Flavians (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian). Each dynasty made significant contributions to the architecture of the capital city and the Empire.

The first Roman emperor, Augustus, enacted a program of extensive building and restoration throughout the city of Rome. He famously noted that he “found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble.”

This building program served the people of Rome by expanding public space , allocating places for trade and politics, and providing and improving the temples so the people could the serve the gods. As with his artistic iconography , this too became the standard that later emperors modeled their own building programs on.

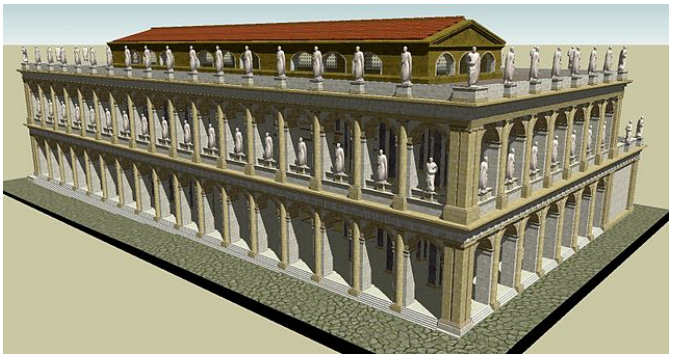
Basilica Julia

The basilica is a form of building that dates to the Roman Republic. Essentially it is the town hall in ancient Roman life, and many senators and emperors commissioned basilicas to commemorate their contributions to society.

In 46 BCE, Julius Caesar began the construction of the Basilica Julia, funded by spoils from the Gallic War, in the Roman forum . The basilica burned shortly after its completion, but Augustus oversaw its reconstruction and rededicated the building in 12 CE, naming the building after his great uncle and adoptive father.

The Basilica Julia housed the civil law courts and tabernae (shops), and provided space for government offices and banking. In the first century, it also housed the Court of the Hundred, which oversaw matters of inheritance.

It was a large and ornate structure with two levels of arcades . On both levels, an engaged column stood between each pair of arches. Tuscan columns adorned the ground level, while Roman Ionic columns adorned the second level. Full-length sculptures of men, possibly senators or other significant historical or political figures, stood under each arch on the second level and lined the roof above each engaged Ionic column. A similar pattern would appear on the Colosseum under the Flavians in the late first century CE.



Basilica Julia: This is a computer generated image of the basilica, a large and ornate structure with two levels of arcades.

The Domus Aurea

In 64 CE, a fire erupted in Rome and burned ten of the fourteen districts in the city. Nero appropriated some of the newly cleared land for his own use. This land, located on the hills east of the Forum Romanum, became home to his new palatial structure known as the Domus Aurea, or the Golden House.

Nero’s complex included a private lake, landscaped gardens and porticoes, a colossal golden statue of himself, and rooms for entertaining that were lavishly decorated with mosaics , frescoes , and gold leaf . The surviving frescoes provide excellent examples of Pompeiian fourth- style painting, a fantastical style that inspired Renaissance grotesque when portions of the palace were discovered at the end of the 1400s.

Nero's architects and engineers, Severus and Celer, designed the Domus Aurea and demonstrated some of the unique architectural shapes made possible through concrete construction. An octagonal hall testifies to the architects' ingenuity. The octagonal room stands between multiple rooms, possibly for dining, and is delineated by eight piers that support a domed roof with an oculus that lit not only the hall but also the surrounding rooms. The octagonal hall emphasizes the role of concrete in shaping interior space, and the use of natural light to create drama.

Domus Aurea: The octagonal room with its surviving concrete dome and oculus.

Following Nero's forced suicide in 68 CE, Rome plunged into a year of civil war as four generals vied against each other for power and Vespasian emerged victorious. After the year of warfare, Vespasian sought to establish stability both in Rome and throughout the empire. He and the sons who succeeded him ruled Rome for twenty-seven years.

Vespasian was succeeded by his son Titus, whose reign was short. Domitian, Titus's younger brother, became the next emperor and reigned until his assassination in 96 CE. Despite being a relatively popular emperor with the people, Domitian had few friends in the Senate. His memory was condemned formally through damnatio memoriae —an edict that erased all memory and history of the person by removing their name from all documents and destroying all their portraits.

Flavian Amphitheater

Upon his succession, Vespasian began a vast building program in Rome that was continued by Titus and Domitian. It was a cunning political scheme to garner support from the people of Rome.

Vespasian transformed land from Nero's Domus Aurea into public buildings for leisure and entertainment, such as the Baths of Titus and the Flavian Amphitheatre. Nero's private lake was drained and became the foundations for the amphitheater, the first permanent amphitheater built in the city of Rome. Before this time, gladiatorial contests in the city were held in temporary wooden arenas.

The amphitheater became known as the Colosseum for its size, but in also in reference to a colossal golden statue of Nero that stood nearby. Vespasian had the colossus reworked into an image of the sun god, Sol.

Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum): The exterior of the Flavian Amphitheater or Colosseum, 70–80 CE, in Rome, Italy.

The building of the amphitheater began under Vespasian in 72 CE, and was completed under Titus in 80 CE. Titus inaugurated the amphitheater with a series of gladiatorial games and events that lasted for 100 days.

During his reign, Domitian remodeled parts of the amphitheater to enlarge the seating capacity to hold 50,000 spectators and added a hypogeum beneath the arena, for storage and to transport animals and people to the arena floor. The Colosseum was home not just to gladiatorial events—because it was built over Nero's private lake, it was flooded to stage mock naval battles.

Like all Roman amphitheaters, the Colosseum is a free-standing structure, whose shape comes from the combination of two semi-spherical theaters. The Colosseum exists in part as a result of improvements in concrete and the strength and stability of Roman engineering, especially their use of the repetitive form of the arch. The concrete structure is faced in travertine and marble.

The exterior of the Colosseum is divided into four bands that represent four interior arcades. The arcades are carefully designed to allow tens of thousands of spectators to enter and exit within minutes. Attached to the uppermost band are over two hundred corbels which supported the velarium —a retractable awning to protect spectators from sun and rain. The top band is also pierced by a number of small windows, between which are engaged composite pilasters .

The three bands below are notable for the series of arches that visually break up the massive façade. The arches on the ground level served as numbered entrances, while those of the two middle levels framed statues of gods, goddesses, and mythical and historical heroes. Columns in each of the three Greek orders stand between the arches. The Doric order is located on the ground level, Ionic on the second level, and Corinthian on the third. The order follows a standard sequence where the sturdiest and strongest order is shown on bottom level, since it appears to support the weight of the structure, and the lightest order at the top. However, despite this illusion the engaged columns and pilasters were merely decorative.

Arch of Titus

Following his brother's death, Domitian erected a triumphal arch over the Via Sacra, on a rise as the road enters the Republican Forum. The Arch of Titus honors the deified Titus and celebrates his victory over Judea in 70 CE. The arch follows the standard forms for a triumphal arch, with an honorific inscription in the attic, winged Victories in the spandrels , engaged columns, and more sculpture which is now lost.

Inside the archway at the center of the ceiling is a relief panel of the apotheosis of Titus. Two remarkable relief panels decorate the interior sides of the archway and commemorate Titus's victory in Judea.

Arch of Titus: Via Sacra, Rome. 81-82 CE.

The southern panel inside the arch depicts the sacking of Jerusalem. The scene shows Roman soldiers carrying the menorah (the sacred candelabrum) and other spoils from the Temple of Jerusalem.

The opposite northern panel depicts Titus's triumphal procession in Rome, awarded in 71 CE. In this panel, Titus rides through Rome on a chariot pulled by four horses. Behind him a winged Victory figure crowns Titus with a laurel wreath. He is accompanied by personifications of Honor and Valor.

This is one of the first examples in Roman art of humans and divinities mingling together in one scene; indeed, Titus was deified upon his death. These panels were originally painted and decorated with metal attachments and gilding. The panels are depicted in high relief and show a change in technical style from the lower relief seen on the Ara Pacis Augustae.

Triumph of Titus: This relief from the Arch of Titus that shows the triumphal procession for Titus upon his victory over Judea.

Sacking of Jerusalem.: This is a relief from the Arch of Titus.

Painting in the Early Roman Empire

Roman frescoes were the primary method of interior decoration and their development is generally categorized into four different styles.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Pompeian First, Second, Third, and Fourth Styles of painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The development of fresco -painting styles is a visual example of the changing tastes from the third century BCE through the first century CE. The change in styles reflects the changes that occurred in Roman society.
- Pompeiian First Style, which originated from the Greeks, is also known as masonry style. It mimics marble and colored stone to create the illusion of an expensive veneer. It was popular from 200 to 80 BCE.
- Pompeiian Second Style is known for its dissolution of the wall into an architectural vista that makes logical sense. This style was typically used from 80 to 20 BCE. Examples of this style adorn the walls of the Villa of Livia and the Villa of the Mysteries.
- Pompeiian Third Style is a whimsical style full of fanciful architecture and Egyptian motifs that focuses more on creating an ornate rather than realistic space . It also includes painted scenes floating on a monochromatic backdrop. This style became popular in 20 BCE until about 60 CE. Examples of this style can be found at the Villa of Agrippa Postumus.
- Pompeiian Fourth Style is a less ornamented but more complex reaction to Third Style. It borrows elements from the three preceding styles, including faux masonry, architectural vistas, ornamental decorations, and panels of painted scenes. Fourth-Style painting was popular during the first century CE. Examples of this style are found at the House of the Vettii and the House of the Tragic Poet, as well as in a contemporary scene of a riot at a local amphitheater.

Key Terms

- **triclinium**: Formal dining room.
- **buon fresco**: A painting that involves applying wet paint to wet lime plaster. As both components dry, a chemical reaction causes them to fuse together, literally making the painting part of the wall.
- **encaustic**: A wax-based paint that is fixed in place by heating; a painting produced using this paint.
- **fresco**: In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to lime mortar or plaster.
- **Egyptomania**: Roman fascination with all things related to Egypt following the death of Cleopatra in 31 BCE and the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE.
- **trompe l'oeil**: A genre of still-life painting that exploits human vision to create the illusion that the subject of the painting is real.

Roman Painting

Roman painters often painted frescoes, specifically buon fresco , a technique that involved painting pigment on wet plaster. When the painting dried, the image became an integral part of the wall. Fresco painting was the primary method of decorating an interior space. However, few examples survive, and the majority of them are from the remains of Roman houses and villas around Mt. Vesuvius.

Other examples of frescoes come from locations that were buried (burial protected and preserved the frescoes), such as parts of Nero's Domus Aurea and at the Villa of Livia. These frescoes demonstrate a wide variety of styles. Popular subjects include mythology, portraiture, still-life painting, and historical accounts.

The surviving Roman paintings reveal a high degree of sophistication. They employ visual techniques that include atmospheric and near one-point linear perspective to properly convey the idea of space. Furthermore, portraiture and still-life images demonstrate artistic talent when conveying real-life objects and likenesses. The attention to detail seen in still-life paintings include minute shadows and an attention to light to properly depict the material of the object, whether it be glass, food, ceramics , or animals.

Roman portraiture further exhibits the talent of Roman painters and often shows careful study on the artist's part in the techniques used to portray individual faces and people. Some of the most interesting portraits come from Egypt, from late first century BCE to early third century CE, when Egypt was a province of Rome .

Fayum mummy portrait: A mummy portrait of a young women found in the Fayum Necropolis, Egypt, from the second century CE.

These encaustic on wood panel images from the Fayum necropolis were laid over the mummified body. They show remarkable realism , while conveying the ideals and changing fashions of the Egypto-Roman people.

Classification

At the end of the nineteenth century, August Mau, a German art historian, studied and classified the Roman styles of painting at Pompeii. These styles, known simply as Pompeian First, Second, Third, and Fourth Style, demonstrate the period fashions of interior decoration preferences and changes in taste and style from the Republic through the early Empire.

First Style

Also known as masonry style, Pompeian First Style painting was most commonly used from 200 to 80 BCE. The style is known for its deceptive painting of a faux surface; the painters often tried to mimic the richly veneered surfaces of marble, alabaster , and other expensive types of stone veneer.

This is a Hellenistic (Greek) style adopted by the Romans. While creating an illusion of expensive decor, First-Style painting reinforces the idea of a wall. The style is often found in the fauces (entrance hall) and atrium (large open-air room) of a Roman domus (house). A vivid example is preserved in the fauces of the Samnite House at Herculaneum.

Pompeian First Style: A Pompeiian first-style wall painting from the Samnite House. Fresco. Second century BCE. Herculaneum, Italy.

Second Style

Pompeiian Second Style was first used around 80 BCE and was especially fashionable from 40 BCE onward, until its popularity waned in the final decades of the first century BCE. The style is noted for its visual illusions. These trompe l'oeil images are intended to trick the eye into believing that the walls of a building have dissolved into the depicted three-dimensional space.

Wall frescoes were usually divided into three registers , with the bottom register depicting false masonry painted in the manner of the First Style, while a simple border was painted in the uppermost register. The central register, where the main scene unfolds, is the largest and the focal point of the painting. This space was an architectural zone that became the main component of Second-Style painting.

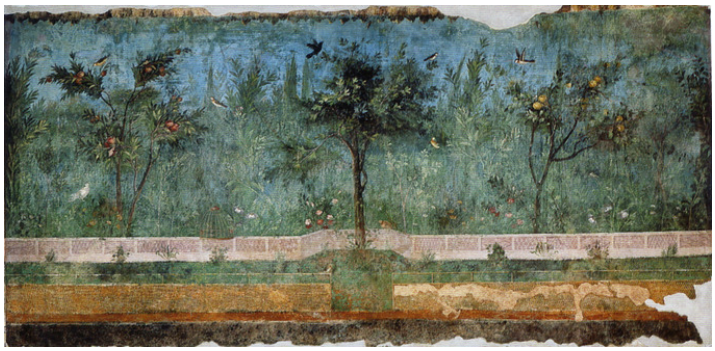
Typically, paintings that relied on near-perfect linear perspective to depict architectural expanses and landscapes that were painted on a human scale. The desired effect was to make the viewer feel as if, while in the room, he or she was physically transported to these spaces.

Detail from the villa of P. Fannius Synistor: An architectural vista from a second-style wall painting in Boscoreale, Italy. c. 50–40 BCE.

Villa of Livia

As the style evolved, the top and bottom registers became less important. Architectural scenes grew to incorporate the entire room, such as at the Villa of the Mysteries and the Villa of Livia.

In the case of the Villa of Livia, architectural vistas are replaced with a natural landscape that completely surrounds the room. The painting mimics the natural landscape outside the villa, depicting identifiable trees, flowers, and birds. Light filters naturally through the trees, which appear to bend in a slight breeze. Naturalistic elements like this, along with the flight of the birds and other details, help transport the occupant in the room into an outdoor setting.



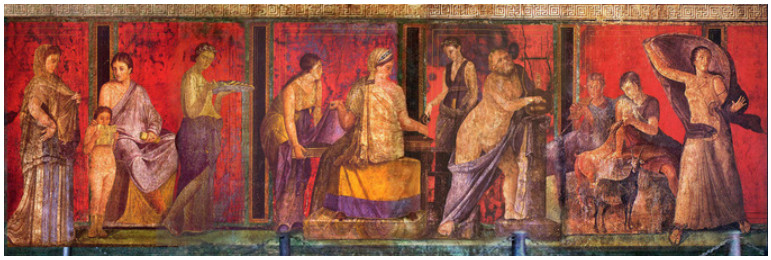
Villa of Livia: A Second-Style garden vista from the Villa of Livia, in Primaporta, Italy, from the late first century BCE.

Villa of the Mysteries

At the Villa of the Mysteries, just outside of Pompeii, there is a fantastic scene filled with life-size figures that depicts a ritual element from a Dionysian mystery cult. In this Second-Style example, architectural elements play a small role in creating the

illusion of ritual space. The people and activity in the scene are the main focus .

The architecture present is mainly piers or wall panels that divide the main scene into separate segments. The figures appear life-size, which brings them into the space of the room.



Villa of the Mysteries: One wall on the ritual scene depicted at the Villa of Mysteries, in Pompeii, Italy, c. 60–50 BCE.

The scene wraps around the room, depicting what may be a rite of marriage. A woman is seen preparing her hair. She is surrounded by other women and cherubs while a figure, identified as Dionysus , waits. The ritual may reenact the marriage between Dionysus and Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos.

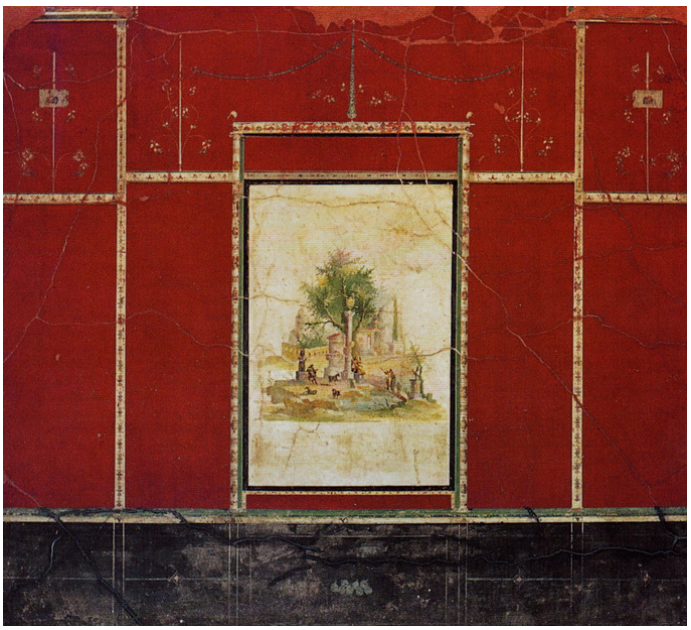
All the figures, except for Dionysus and one small boy, are female. The figures also appear to interact with one other from across the room. On the two walls in one corner, a woman reacts in terror to Dionysus and the mask over his head. On the opposite corner, a cherub appears to be whipping a woman on the adjoining wall. While the cult aspects of the ritual are unknown, the fresco demonstrates the ingenuity and inventiveness of Roman painters.

Third Style

Third-Style Pompeiian painting developed during the last decades of the first century BCE. It was popular from 20 BCE until the middle of the first century CE. During this period, wall painting began to develop a more fantastical personality.

Instead of attempting to dissolve the wall, the Third Style acknowledges the wall through flat, monochromatic expanses painted with small central motifs that look like a hung painting. The architecture painted in Third-Style scenes is often logically impossible. The wall is frequently divided into three to five vertical zones by narrow, spindly columns and decorated with painted foliage, candelabra, birds, animals, and figurines .

Often these creatures and people were derived from Egyptian motifs, resulting from a contemporary Roman fascination with Egypt known as Egyptomania , following the defeat of Cleopatra at Actium and the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE.



Third-Style wall painting: Detail of a Third-Style wall painting from the Villa of Agrippa Postumus in Boscotrecase, Italy, c. 10 BCE.

Fourth Style

The Pompeian Fourth Style became popular around the middle of the first century CE. While considered less ornate than the Third Style, the Fourth Style is more complex and draws on elements from each of the three previous styles.

In this style, masonry details of the First Style reappear on the bottom registers, and the architectural vistas of the Second Style are once more fashionable, although infinitely more complex than their Second-Style predecessors. Fantastical details, Egyptian motifs, and ornamental garlands from the Third Style continued into the Fourth Style. Large pictures, connected to each other by a program or theme, dominated each wall, such as those in the House of the Vettii.

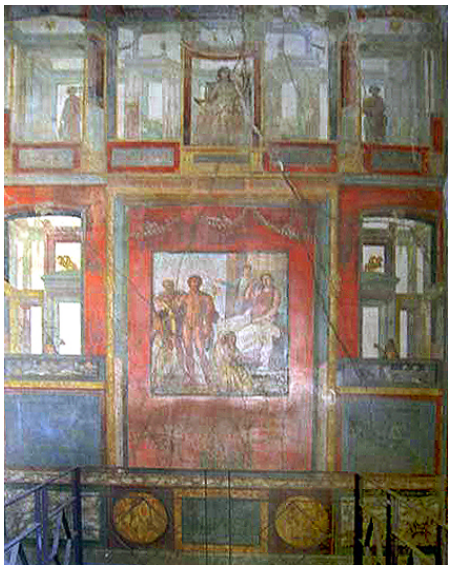
House of the Vettii

Many rooms in the House of the Vettii are lavishly painted. Each triclinium is themed and painted in the Fourth Style. Each panel in the room follows the room's theme, providing visual entertainment and a narrative during dining.

The Ixion Room, for instance, is a model of Fourth-Style wall painting. Within each red panel is a scene that depicts myths where the main character commits a major slight. One panel is dedicated to Ixion, who refused to pay a dowry and murdered his father-in-law. He also lusted after Zeus's wife, betraying the relationship between guest and host.

Another panel depicts Daedalus presenting a wooden cow to Pasiphaë, the wife of King Minos, so she could relieve her lust for a white bull. From this union, Pasiphaë birthed the Minotaur , a half-man, half-bull monster. Another Fourth-Style triclinium depicts scenes from the lives of Hercules and Theseus.

Daedelaus and Pasiphaë: Daedalus presents Pasiphaë with a wooden heifer.



Fourth Style: A Fourth- Style wall fresco in the Ixion Room of the House of the Vettii.

House of the Tragic Poet

The atrium of the House of the Tragic Poet includes a series of paintings that depict scenes from the Trojan War. The panels on the walls depict scenes that appear to be interrelated. As in the panels that decorate the House of the Vettii, the subject matter in the paintings in the House of the Tragic Poet are interrelated based on a common theme. Scholars believe these themes were carefully crafted not only to relate stories, but also to depict the virtues of the house's owner.

Two panels on the south wall relate the beginnings of the Trojan War. One panel is of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida. Another, badly damaged, appears to be a scene of the Judgment of Paris. These panels relate the beginnings of the Trojan War while portraying womanly ideals.

Two pairs of scenes, set across from each other, depict different, interrelated themes. The abduction of women is one theme visible in one image of Helen with Paris leaving for Troy. Another image portrays the abduction of Amphitrite by Poseidon. In both cases, a man abducts a woman.

The other two scenes deal with the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon, which begins the story of the Illiad. Of these two scenes, one depicts Achilles with Agamemnon, while the other depicts Achilles returning Briseis, his lover and captive, to his commander, Agamemnon.

A final image, found in the peristyle , depicts the Sacrifice of Iphigenia. All of these paintings are related to one another through themes such as marriage, womanly virtue, and the Trojan War.

The Sacrifice of Iphigenia: A panel in the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii, Italy, c. 60–65 CE.

Riot at the Amphitheatre

While the above examples of Fourth-Style painting depict scenes from mythology, at least one contemporary scene is represented in a surviving fresco. In 59 CE, a riot broke out between the citizens of Pompeii and the citizens of nearby Nuceria during a gladiatorial event. The brawl in the amphitheater resulted in serious injuries between both parties and the banning of all gladiatorial events for ten years.

A fresco from Pompeii that depicts the event has also survived. The fresco depicts the Pompeiian amphitheater, with its distinctive exterior staircase, as well as an awning, the velarium . It also depicts the riot occurring both inside the arena and on the grounds surrounding the amphitheater.

Depiction of a riot at the amphitheatre at Pompeii: In 59 CE, a riot broke out between the citizens of Pompeii and the citizens of nearby Nuceria during a gladiatorial event. The brawl in the amphitheater resulted in serious injuries between both parties and the banning of all gladiatorial events for ten years.

Architecture at Pompeii

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE preserved many structures in the city of Pompeii, allowing scholars a rare glimpse into Roman life.

Learning Objectives

Describe the physical layout of the domus, or house, and describe the significances of the Amphitheater of Pompeii, the Temple of Isis, and the Suburban Baths

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The main public part of the domus included the fauces, an entryway, the atrium , and the tablinum, a space for conducting business. The main private portions included the peristyle and garden and the triclinium or dining room. All components contained intricate decoration. Additional parts included a cubiculum, a kitchen, and open spaces known as alae.
- Pompeiian houses deviated greatly from the standard model created by historians. Examples demonstrate how the standard elements could be rearranged to fit almost any footprint and the wealth of the patron .
- The Amphitheater of Pompeii was the first stone amphitheater in the Roman world and the largest before the construction of the Colosseum. Its design foresees the construction of the Colosseum one century later, while simultaneously looking back to Greek theaters for its seating.
- The Temple of Isis exhibits elements of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian architecture. Its presence in a Roman city demonstrates religious tolerance and a willingness to incorporate foreign deities into the Roman pantheon .
- The Suburban Baths, while containing the standard tepidarium and caldarium of all Roman bath houses, has a single dressing room that archaeologists believe was used by both men and women.

Key Terms

- **atrium**: A square hall lit by daylight from above, into which rooms open at one or more levels.
- **peristyle**: A colonnade that surrounds a courtyard, temple, etc.
- **patrician**: Originally, a member of any of the families constituting the populus Romanus, or body of Roman citizens, before the development of the plebeian order; later, one who, by right of birth or by special privilege conferred, belonged to the senior class of Romans, who, with certain property, had by right a seat in the Roman Senate.

Mount Vesuvius and the Preservation of Pompeiian Architecture

During the Roman Republic and into the early Empire, the area today known as the Bay of Naples was developed as a resort-type area for elite Romans to escape the pressure and politics of Rome . The region was dominated by Mt. Vesuvius, which famously erupted in August 79 CE, burying and preserving the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, along with the region's villas and farms.

When Vesuvius erupted on August 25, a cloud of ash spewed south, burying the cities of Pompeii, Nuceria, and Stabiae. While not everyone left prior to the eruption, archaeological evidence shows that people did leave the city. Some houses give the impression of having been packed up and in some cases furniture and objects were excavated jumbled together. Other objects of value appear to have been buried or hidden. There is evidence of people returning after the eruption to dig through the remains—either recovering lost goods or looting for valuables.

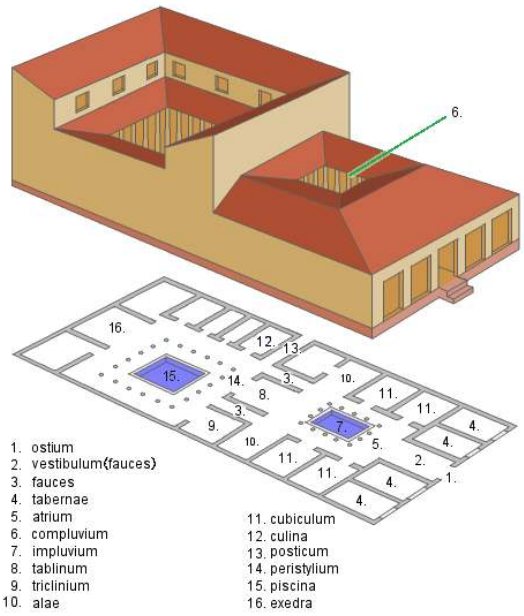
The eruption of Mount Vesuvius: The black and gray areas show the direction in which the wind blew the ash and pyroclastic clouds.

In Pompeii, an ash flow suffocated the remaining population and allowed all organic matter to decompose. However, where bodies and other organic objects (from bodies to wooden architectural frames) once lay or stood, empty cavities within the ash remained and preserved their outer forms .

A pyroclastic flow of superheated gas and rock went west to the coast and the city of Herculaneum. Unlike the ash blanket of Pompeii, the pyroclastic flow in Herculaneum petrified organic material, ensuring the preservation of human remains and wood, including the preservation of wooden screens, beds, and shelving. Many of the frescoes , mosaics , and other non-organic materials in both the ash and pyroclastic flows were preserved until their excavation in the modern period.

The Roman Domus

The Roman domus, or house, played two important roles in Roman society: as a home and as a place of business for patricians and wealthy Romans. To facilitate this dual functionality, the domus had a distinct set of rooms that could be used as either public or private spaces. While no modern domus adheres to the standard model of a domus, many Roman houses, both small and large, have nearly all of these different rooms.



Roman Domus: A standard plan of a Roman domus.

The design of the domus reflects the Roman patronage where a client is protected by a wealthy patron, and in return supports the actions and estate of the patron. Many of a patron's clients would be freedmen or other plebeians and lesser patricians.

The domus is often set back from the main street, and tabernae (shops) line the streets on either side of the house's main entrance. Clients entered the house through the fauces (Latin for jaw), which was a narrow entryway into an atrium.

The atrium was the most important part of the house since it was the spot where clients and guests were greeted. It often included an impluvium, or basin that collected rain water. The roof did not cover the impluvium. The open space above the basin was called the compluvium.

The atrium was often richly decorated with thematic frescos and images of the patron's ancestors. Cubicula , or rooms, lined the atrium, and at the far end was the tablinum. The tablinum functioned as the office of the patron and was where he met with his clients during the morning ritual of salutatio. The tablinum often provided a glimpse into the private sphere of the house, which was set behind the office.

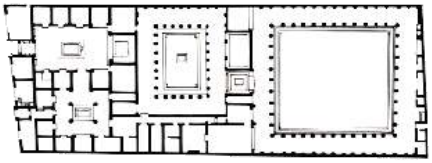
Typically, the front half of the house served as public space, while the back of the domus was reserved for the more private functions of the family. In the back of the house, beyond the tablinum, would be one or more triclinium (plural: triclinia), or dining rooms. The dining rooms were lavishly decorated and typically furnished with dining couches and a low table.

A peristyle—a colonnaded courtyard—was usually the main feature of the back of the house. It could contain gardens and even a pool and provided light as well as shade and breeze for hot summer days. Other features of the domus, include alae (open rooms) with an unknown function, kitchens (culina), and additional rooms for work, sleeping, and servants.

Domus at Pompeii

Each domus throughout Pompeii represents the various ways the standard components of a domus were used to create unique floor plans that showcase the status and wealth of the owner.

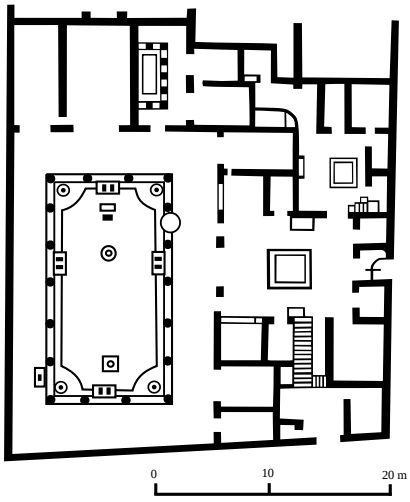
The large complex of the House of the Faun encompasses an entire city block. This domus has two atria, each with its own fauces, although with two peristyles of different sizes. In essence, the House of the Faun was a private villa despite its urban setting.



House of the Faun: Ground plan of the House of the Faun in Pompeii, Italy.

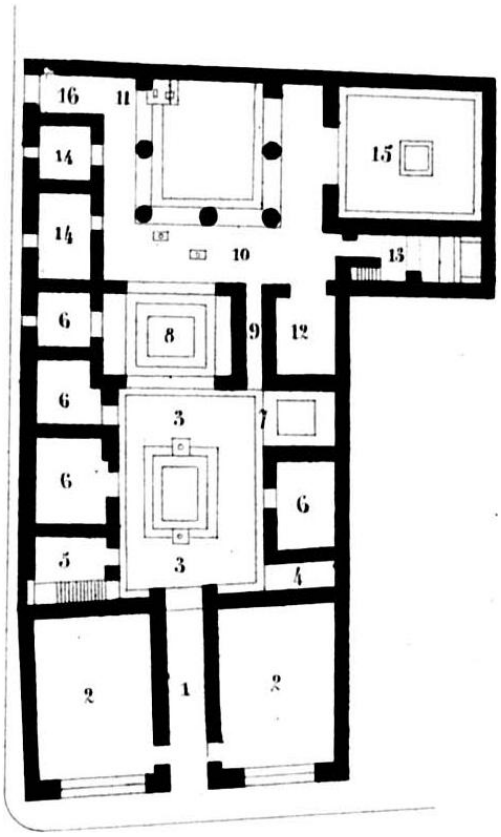
Two houses, the House of the Vettii and the House of the Tragic Poet—both previously discussed for their wall paintings—are simpler constructions than the House of the Faun, but both house plans still readily depict the wealth of the household.

Visitors entering the House of the Vettii were greeted by a frescoed image of Priapus, an image that portrayed the wealth and luck of the two bachelors who lived inside. The main attributes of their house were the atrium and the large garden peristyle, surrounded by decorated triclinium and a garden complete with fountains, statues, and flowers. While this house had fewer public-private access restrictions than the standard domus, it did include the main attributes of a traditional Roman house.



House of the Vettii: Ground plan of the House of the Vettii in Pompeii, Italy.

The House of the Tragic Poet was small but maintained the public-private access characteristic of the traditional domus. The fauces was especially noted for its mosaic image of a dog, complete with the warning “Cave canem,” or, roughly, “Beware of dog.” The fauces led the guest into the atrium and the tablinum, which divided the public front of the house from the private back of the house, where a small peristyle and a frescoed triclinium were located.



House of the Tragic Poet: Ground plan of the House of the Tragic Poet.

Public Architecture

The ash cloud that blanketed Pompeii in 79 CE preserved public buildings, as well as domi. Among the best preserved are the amphitheater, the Temple of Isis, and the Suburban Baths.

Amphitheater of Pompeii

The Amphitheater of Pompeii is the oldest surviving Roman amphitheater. Built around 70 BCE, the current amphitheater is the earliest Roman amphitheater known to have been built of stone. Previous amphitheaters were constructed of wood.

The design is seen by some modern crowd control specialists as near optimal. Similar to the Colosseum, but constructed over a century later, its arcaded exterior appears to have been conducive to efficient evacuation. Its washroom, located in the neighboring wrestling school, has also been cited as an inspiration for better bathroom design in modern stadiums.

Amphitheater of Pompeii: Built c. 70 BCE.

Derived from the Greek words amphi (on both sides) and theatron (a place for viewing), an amphitheater combines two theaters into a circular or ovoid form. The interior of the amphitheater at Pompeii resembles two Greek theaters, with its tiered seating overlooking a central staging area. Still structurally and acoustically sound, the amphitheater was the site of notable rock concerts in 1971 and 2016.

Amphitheatre of Pompeii: The interior, with its tiered seating, shows the influence of Greek designs.

Temple of Isis

Roman culture was accommodating of most of the religious beliefs of its conquered peoples, and often built temples and sanctuaries to non-Roman deities and incorporated them into their own pantheon. One such example is the Temple of Isis, dedicated to the Egyptian mother goddess.

The principal devotees of this temple are assumed to be women, freedmen, and slaves. Initiates of the Isis mystery cult worshiped a compassionate goddess who promised eventual salvation and a perpetual relationship throughout life and after death.

The temple's design combines Roman, Greek, and Egyptian architectural elements. It is surrounded by brick columns faced with plaster in a stylized reed motif often found on Egyptian columns. Their general shape recalls both the Doric and Tuscan orders.

Like typical Roman temples, the portico and cella rest on a raised platform connected to the ground by a central stairway. The columns on the portico appear to have been Tuscan. To either side of the cella is an arched niche flanked by either Corinthian or Composite pillasters.

Temple of Isis: The temple's design combines Roman, Greek, and Egyptian architectural elements.

Suburban Baths

The Suburban Baths (c. late first century BCE), built against the city walls, served as a public bath house for the residents of Pompeii. The entrance to the Baths is through a long corridor that leads into the dressing room.

Excavation of the Baths revealed only one set of dressing rooms and has led archaeologists to believe that both men and women shared this facility. The dressing room then led to the tepidarium (lukewarm room), followed by the caldarium (hot room), both of

which were standard in public baths throughout the empire.

Suburban Baths: Built against the city walls, this structure served as a public bath house for the residents of Pompeii.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- August Labicana Massimo Inv56230. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:August_Labicana_Massimo_Inv56230.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ara Pacis Rom. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ara_Pacis_Rom.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- RomaAraPacis ProcessioneSudParticolare. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RomaAraPacis_ProcessioneSudParticolare.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mann6720_54.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikispaces. **Located at**: romansurvivalguide.wikispaces.com/file/view/mann6720_54.jpg/54180252/160x260/mann6720_54.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Statue-Augustus. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue-Augustus.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Statue_Claudius_Vatikanische_Museen.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16936276. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Vipsanius_Agrippa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Julia the Elder. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_the_Elder. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- TIberius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claudius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ara Pacis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ara_Pacis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pontifex Maximus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontifex_Maximus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Augustus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus%23Legacy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Augustus of Prima Porta. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_of_Prima_Porta%23Divine_status. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Meander (Art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Meander_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lictor. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lictor. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Pomerium. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomerium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Register (Sculpture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Register_(sculpture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 517px-Arch_Titus,_Forum_Romanum,_Rome,_Italy.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29534538. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Arch of titus relief 1. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arch_of_titus_relief_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Domus_Aurea_Octagon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39732186. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Basilica_Julia.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18437271%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Detail from Arch of Titus. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Detail_from_Arch_of_Titus.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Colosseum-exterior-2007. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colosseum-exterior-2007.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Basilica. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Basilica Julia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_Julia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grotesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Grotesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Julio-Claudians. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/11000. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arch of Titus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Titus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vespasian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vespasian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Titus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Titus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Colosseum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Colosseum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Flavians. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Flavians. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Domitian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Domitian%23Rise_of_the_Flavian_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Year of the Four Emperors. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_of_the_Four_Emperors. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apotheosis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/apotheosis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spandrel. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/spandrel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Damnatio Memoriae. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/damnatio%20memoriae. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Menorah. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/menorah. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- esco-iphigeneia-man-naples.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fresco_Iphigeneia_MAN_Naples.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- i-wandmalerei-amphitheater.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeji_-_Wandmalerei_-_Amphitheater.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Villa-dei-misteri-pannel.jp.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_fresco_Villa_dei_Misteri_Pompeii_005.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Casa dei vettii - pannel fresco. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Casa_dei_vettii_-_pannel_fresco.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Herculaneum Wall 1.Style. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Herculaneum_Wall_1.Style.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rom-Villa-Livia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rom-Villa-Livia.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fresco-Boscotrecase. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fresco-Boscotrecase.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Scene 3, left. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Scene_3,_left.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fayum-34. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fayum-34.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- i-casa-dei-vettii-pasiphae.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeii_-_Casa_dei_Vettii_-_Pasiphae.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Painting. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10757. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pompeiian Styles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeian_Styles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pompeii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fresco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fresco%23Classical_antiquity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vesuvius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vesuvius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- August Mau. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Mau. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_art%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fayum Mummy Portraits. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayum_mummy_portraits%23Art-historical_significance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Encaustic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/encaustic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Egyptomania in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/egyptomania. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trompe l'oeil. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/trompe_l'oeil. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 609px-Brogi,_Giacomo_(1822-1881)_-_Pompei_-_Tempio_d'Iside_-_n._5038_-_ca._1870.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1503411%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pompeii Region VI Insula 8 House 3 plan 01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeii_Region_VI_Insula_8_House_3_plan_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- File:Casa dei vetti - planimetria.svg - Wikipedia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Casa_dei_vetti_-_planimetria.svg&page=1. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Pompeji_-_Arena.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=554974. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Domus romana. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Domus_romana.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Porta_Marina_(7238835816).jpg. **Provided by**: Wuikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30180123%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- HoFBuildingPlan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HoFBuildingPlan.gif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ples-20-20vesuvius-20blast.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mt_Vesuvius_79_AD_eruption.svg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 640px-Anfiteatro_romano_Pompei.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19173754. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Temple of Isis (Pompeii). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Isis_(Pompeii). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Amphitheatre of Pompeii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphitheatre_of_Pompeii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10760. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Suburban Baths (Pompeii). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Suburban_Baths_(Pompeii). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Casa dei Vettii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Casa_dei_Vettii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pompeii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Domus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Domus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- House of the Vettii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_the_Vettii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- House of the Faun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_the_Faun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- House of the Tragic Poet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_the_Tragic_Poet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Patrician. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/patrician. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Atrium. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/atrium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Peristyle. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/peristyle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 8.3: The Early Empire is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.4: The Nervan-Antonines

Architecture under the Nervan-Antonines

The emperors Trajan and Hadrian were the two most prolific emperors who constructed buildings during the Nervan-Antonine dynasty.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Trajan's Forum, Trajan's Markets, Hadrian's Pantheon, and Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Trajan's Forum was built from 106 to 113 CE from the spoils of the conquest of Dacia , and it celebrates Trajan's military power. The forum provided much-needed public space for law courts and other political and administrative meetings.
- The Markets of Trajan were built into the Quirinal Hill. The vaulted halls provided rooms for administrative offices, shops, and perhaps even apartments.
- Apollodorus of Damascus was Trajan's court architect who designed and built many of Trajan's architectural projects. He was dismissed by Hadrian, because he did not appreciate Hadrian's architectural inspirations.
- Hadrian rebuilt the Pantheon of Agrippa in 118–125 CE. The Pantheon is an architectural innovation with a magnificent unreinforced concrete dome .
- Hadrian's villa at Tivoli demonstrates his interest in the eclectic cultural styles he saw during his travels around the empire, as well as his own innovative spirit toward architecture.

Key Terms

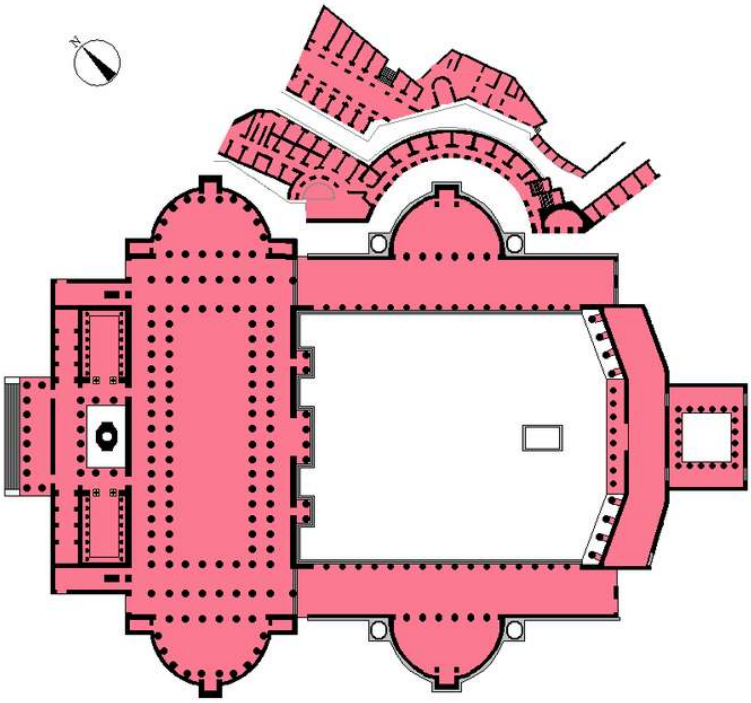
- **coffered**: Having an ornamental sunken panel in a ceiling or dome.
- **quadriga**: A Roman chariot drawn by four horses abreast.
- **exedra**: A semicircular recess, with stone benches, used as a place for discussion.
- **forum**: A public square in an ancient Roman city.
- **oculus**: A window or other opening that has an oval or circular shape (as of an eye).

Public Building Programs

Public building programs were prevalent under the emperors of the Nervan-Antonine dynasty . During this period of peace, stability, and an expansion of the empire's borders, many of the emperors sought to cast themselves in the image of the first imperial builder, Augustus. The projects these emperors conducted around the empire included the building and restoration of roads, bridges, and aqueducts . In Rome , these imperial building projects strengthened the image of the emperor and directly addressed the needs of the citizens of the city.

Trajan's Forum

Trajan's Forum was the last of the imperial fora to be built in the city. The forum's main entrance was accessed from the south, near to the Forum of Augustus as well as the Forum of Caesar (which Trajan also renovated). The Forum of Augustus might have been the model for the Forum of Trajan, even though the latter was much larger. Both fora were rectangular in shape with a temple at one end. Both appear to have a set of exedra on either side.



Plan of the Forum of Trajan and Trajan's Markets: Trajan built the forum and markets around the same time from 106 to 113 CE.

Trajan built his forum with the spoils from his conquest of Dacia. The visual elements within the forum speak of his military prowess and Rome's victory. A triumphal arch mounted with an image of the emperor in a six-horse chariot greeted patrons at the southern entrance.

In the center of the large courtyard stood an equestrian statue of Trajan, and additional bronze statues of him in a quadriga lined the roof of the Basilica Ulpia, which transected the forum in the northern end. This large civic building served as a meeting place for the commerce and law courts. It was lavishly furnished with marble floors, facades , and the hall was filled with tall marble columns .

The Basilica Ulpia also separated the arcaded courtyard from two libraries (one for Greek texts, the other for Latin), the Column of Trajan, and a temple dedicated to the Divine Trajan.

Trajan's Markets

Trajan's markets were an additional public building that the emperor built at the same time as his forum. The markets were built on top of and into the Quirinal Hill. They consisted of a series of multi-leveled halls lined with rooms for either shops, administrative offices, or apartments. The markets follow the shape of the Trajan's forum.

A portion of them are shaped into a large exedra, framing one of the exedra of the forum. Like Trajan's forum, the markets were elaborately decorated with marble floors and revetment, as well as decorative columns to frame the doorways.

Trajan's Markets: Trajan's Markets as they stand today.

Apollodorus of Damascus

Many of Trajan's architectural achievements were designed by his architect, Apollodorus of Damascus. Apollodorus was a Greek engineer from Damascus, Syria. He designed Trajan's forums and markets, the Arch of Trajan at Benevento, and an important

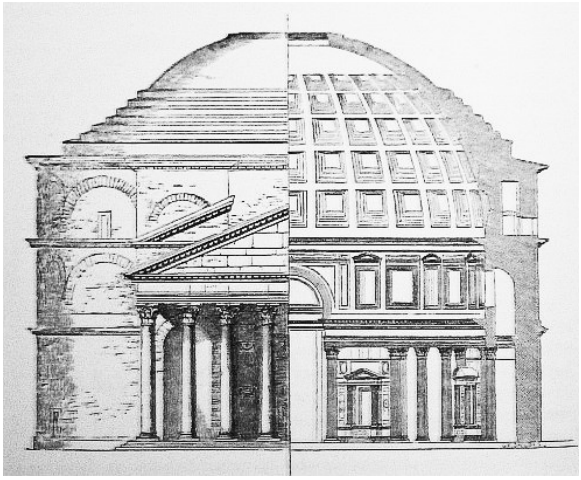
bridge across the Danube during the campaigns against the Dacians.

Unfortunately for Apollodorus, Trajan's heir Hadrian also took an interest in architecture. According to Roman biographers, Apollodorus did not appreciate Hadrian's interests or architectural drawings and often discredited them. Upon the succession of the new emperor, Apollodorus was dismissed from court.

Hadrian's Pantheon

Hadrian's most famous contribution to the city of Rome was his rebuilding of the Pantheon, a temple to all the gods, that was first built by Agrippa during the reign of Augustus. Agrippa's Pantheon burned down in the 80s CE, was rebuilt by Domitian, and burned down again in 110 CE.

Hadrian's Pantheon still remains standing today, a great testament of Roman engineering and ingenuity. The Pantheon was consecrated as a church during the medieval period and was later used a burial site.



Elevation drawing of the Pantheon: The Pantheon is an architectural innovation with a magnificent concrete, unreinforced dome.

Pantheon: Hadrian rebuilt the Pantheon of Agrippa in 118–125 CE.

The most unusual aspect of the Pantheon is its magnificent coffered dome, which was originally gilded in bronze. The concrete dome, which provided inspiration to numerous Renaissance and Neoclassical architects, spans over 142 feet and remains the largest unreinforced dome today. It stands due to a series of relieving arches and because the supportive base of the building is nearly twenty feet thick.

The cylindrical drum on which the dome rests consists of hollowed-out brick filled with concrete for extra reinforcement. At the center of the dome is a large oculus that lets in light, fresh air, and even rain. Both the oculus and the coffered ceiling lighten the weight of the dome, allowing it to stand without additional supports.

The Pantheon takes its shape from Greek circular temples, however it is faced by a Roman rectangular portico and a triangular pediment supported by monolithic granite columns imported from Egypt. The portico, which originally included a flight of stairs to a podium, acts as a visual trick, preparing viewers to enter a typical rectangular temple when they would instead be walking into a circular one.

A dedicatory inscription is carved in the entablature under the pediment. The inscription reads as the original inscription would have read when the Pantheon was first built by Agrippa. Hadrian's decision to use the original inscription links him to the original imperial builders of Rome.

Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

Hadrian traveled extensively during his reign and was frequently exposed to a variety of local architectural styles. His villa at Tivoli (built during the second and third decades of the second century CE) reflects the influence of styles found in locations such as Greece and Egypt.

Among the designs he borrowed are caryatids and statues beside them that depict the Egyptian dwarf and fertility god Bes. A Greek Maritime Theater exhibits classical Ionic style, whereas the domes of the main buildings, as well as the Corinthian arches of the Canopus (a pool) and Serapeum (an artificial grotto), clearly show the influence of Roman architecture.

One structure in the villa is the so-called Maritime Theater. It consists of a round portico with a barrel vault supported by pillars . Inside the portico was a ring-shaped pool with a central island. Inside the outer wall and surrounding the moat are a ring of unfluted Ionic columns.

The Maritime Theater includes a lounge, a library, heated baths, three suites with heated floors, washbasin, an art gallery, and a large fountain. During the ancient times, the island was connected to the portico by two wooden drawbridges. On the island sits a small Roman house complete with an atrium , a library, a triclinium , and small baths. The area was probably used by the emperor as a retreat from the busy life at the court.

Maritime Theater at Hadrian's villa: The theater includes a lounge, a library, heated baths, three suites with heated floors, washbasin, an art gallery, and a large fountain.

The villa utilizes numerous architectural styles and innovations. The domes of the steam baths have circular holes on the apex to allow steam to escape. This is reminiscent of the Pantheon.

The area has a network of underground tunnels. The tunnels were mostly used to transport servants and goods from one area to another. In total, the villa's structures demonstrate the emperor's innovative spirit in the field of architecture.

Great Baths at Hadrian's villa.: The domes of the steam baths have circular holes on the apex to allow steam to escape.

Imperial Sculpture under the Nervan-Antonines

The imperial portraiture of men and women in the early- to mid-second century reflects an increasing austerity and interest in the Greeks.

Learning Objectives

Contrast male and female imperial portraiture during this time period from that of the Flavian dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The portraiture of Nerva and Trajan display a militaristic look.
- Hadrian changed the Roman portrait style to reflect the Greek style and he mimicked the hair and beard style of ancient Greek politicians. Antoninus Pius continued this style, while Marcus Aurelius modeled his appearance after Greek philosophers.
- Commodus believed himself to be the reincarnation of Hercules and commissioned portraits of himself as Hercules, complete with attributes associated with the hero and his deeds.
- Imperial women set the style and fashion for elite hair styles. The styles of Trajan's wife Pompeia Plotina and his niece Matidia demonstrate a simplified abstract vertical form based on the earlier curly, extravagant Flavian style.
- Both Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius's wives chose to follow their respective husband's choice of style, and are depicted with hairstyles that derive from Greece, though they are notably more subdued than the styles of their predecessors.

Key Terms

- **Hercules**: The son of Jupiter and Alcmene, he is a celebrated hero who possessed exceptional strength. Most famous for his 12 labors performed to redeem himself after killing his family.
- **Pericles**: A prominent and influential Greek statesman, orator, and a general of Athens during the city's Golden Age—specifically, the time between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.

Imperial Portraiture

Imperial portraiture under the Flavians first depicted the emperors as mature, older men. Nerva, who only reigned for two years before his natural death in 98 CE, was declared emperor by the Senate following Domitian's assassination. Since he had no natural sons of his own, Nerva adopted a young and popular general, Trajan, to be his successor.

Nerva's portraiture followed the style of imperial portraiture during the Flavian era. The few portraits that remain from the two years of his rule depict a man with a receding hairline and small mouth. The portraiture of Nerva and later of Trajan display an increasing militaristic look.

Nerva: The portraiture of Nerva and later of Trajan display an increasing militaristic look.

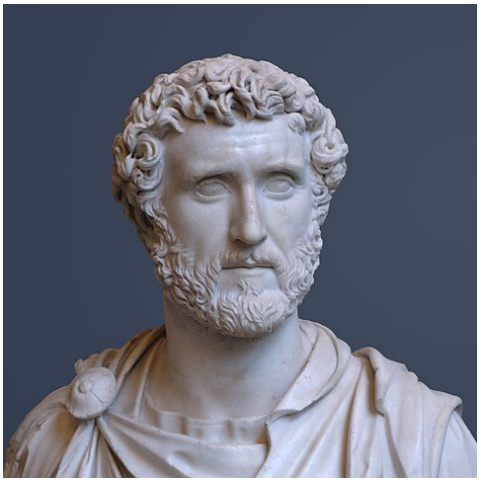
Nerva's successor and adopted son Trajan was a much more successful emperor who was well liked by both the Senate and the people of Rome . He reigned for nearly twenty years (98–117 CE), and expanded the empire's borders while implementing extensive public building and social welfare programs. Trajan's portraits depict him as aging, but always with a full head of hair and a typical Roman hairstyle that is reminiscent of, although not identical to, those of Augustus and Alexander the Great .

Trajan: Trajan's portraits depict him as aging, but always with a full head of hair and a typical Roman hairstyle that is reminiscent of, although not identical to, those of Augustus and Alexander the Great.

Hadrian, Trajan's adopted son and heir, peacefully became emperor in 117 CE. He was a great lover of Greek culture and wore a closely trimmed beard in the style of Classical Greek statesmen, such as the Athenian Pericles . Hadrian set a fashion for beards among Romans, and most emperors after him also wore a beard. Prior to Hadrian nearly all Roman men were clean shaven.

Hadrian: Hadrian set a fashion for beards among Romans, and most emperors after him also wore a beard.

Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's adopted heir and successor, mimics his predecessor's appearance in his official portraits—thick curly hair and a curly, closely-trimmed beard. By having his own portraits copy those of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius forged a visual link between himself and his predecessor.



Antoninus Pius: By having his own portraits copy those of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius forged a visual link between himself and his predecessor.

Antonius Pius's adoptive sons Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius are also identified by the beards they wore. Both men are depicted with heads of thick, curly hair and a long, curly beards. Unlike the closely trimmed beard style of Greek statesmen, this style was more akin to the preferred style of the Greek philosophers. Marcus Aurelius admired the Greeks and was himself a philosopher. This style matched his personality and interests.

Marcus Aurelius: Marcus Aurelius admired the Greeks and was himself a philosopher. He wore his beard long and curly, like the Greek philosophers.

Lucius Verus: The brother of Marcus Aurelius also wore his beard long and curly, like the Greek philosophers, unlike the closely trimmed beard style of Greek statesmen.

Unlike the rest of the emperors of the Nervan-Antonine line , Marcus Aurelius fathered a son who became his heir. Commodus's portrait style followed that of his father and of preceding emperors. Commodus was egotistical and even had the head of the Colossus of Nero (now an image of the god Sol) recast in his own likeness.

Commodus also believed he was the reincarnation of Hercules and claimed power from Hercules's father, Jupiter. He even commissioned portraits of himself as Hercules. These portraits show him with the now-traditional imperial style of thick, curly hair and a curly beard. Hercules's lion skin is draped over his head and around his shoulders and he often carries a club and sometimes the apples of the Hesperides.

Commodus as Hercules: Commodus believed he was the reincarnation of Hercules and claimed power from Hercules's father, Jupiter. He even commissioned portraits of himself as Hercules.

Imperial Female Portraiture

The women of imperial families set the standards of fashion and beauty during the reigns of their husbands or other male family members. These women also established the hairstyles of the period, which are so distinctive that busts and statues are easily dated to specific decades in accordance with the hairstyle of the woman depicted.

During the Nervan-Antonine period, the portraits of imperial women and their hairstyles kept some Flavian flavor but were simpler than they had been. The fashionable style among women during the reign of the Flavians involved hairpieces and wigs to create a stack of curls on the crown of the head.

Trajan's wife Pompeia Plotina and his niece Matidia established a new style that was almost an abstraction of the Flavian style. Their hairstyles still involved a vertical element, but the curls were simplified on the crown of the head. Matidia's natural hair was gathered above nape of the neck, while Pompeia Plotina wore a braid at the back of her head.

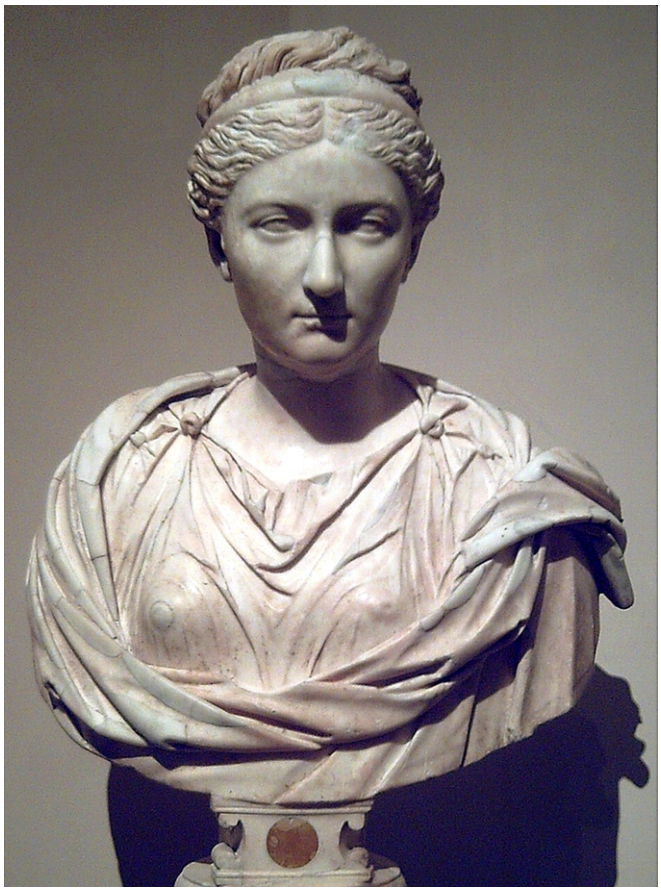
Pompeia Plotina: This profile view of Pompeia Plotina shows the long braid worn behind the crown-like pile of hair in the front.

Matidia: Matidia established a new hair style that was almost an abstraction of the Flavian style.

Bust of a Flavian woman: The fashionable style among women during the reign of the Flavians involved hairpieces and wigs to create a stack of curls on the crown of the head.

Just as Hadrian chose to wear his hair and beard in a Greek style, his wife Sabina also chose a Greek hair style, helping to promote Hadrian's Panhellenic agenda. Sabina is depicted with simplified facial features, and her style is comparable that worn by Praxitiles's sculpture Aphrodite of Knidos. Her hair is held back by a band and carefully woven around the back of the head. A similar style was promoted by Marcus Aurelius's wife, Faustina the Younger, who is depicted with carefully crimped hair worn close the head.

Faustina the Younger: Greek hair style was promoted by Marcus Aurelius's wife, Faustina the Younger, who is depicted here with carefully crimped hair worn close the head.



Vibia Sabina: Just as Hadrian chose to wear his hair and beard in a Greek style, his wife Sabina also chose a Greek hair style, helping to promote Hadrian's Panhellenic agenda.

Victory Columns under the Nervan-Antonines

The monuments dedicated to the reigns of Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius emphasize their military achievements, divinity, and public works.

Learning Objectives

Describe the monuments dedicated to the reigns of Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius and what they emphasized

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Emperor Trajan continued an era of peace and stability that saw the fullest expansion of the empire, as well as the execution of numerous public works, ranging from building programs to social welfare.
- The Column of Trajan is an artistic feat that depicts Trajan's military conquest over the Dacians (101 CE–102 CE and 105 CE–16 CE), through a series of more than 150 episodes that show over 2,500 figures .
- The Antonine dynasty consists of four emperors, who ruled from 132 to 192 CE. Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius are considered the last two of the Five Good Emperors who reigned consecutively during the second century CE.
- The pedestal for the Column of Antoninus Pius, erected by his adopted sons and heirs, depict both a conservative Classical artistic style as well as a new artistic style that was previously only seen in plebeian art.
- Despite sharing several attributes with the Column of Trajan, the Column of Marcus Aurelius features higher reliefs , stockier figures, distorted proportions, and emphasis on military strength. These new elements point to the changing priorities and social-political attitudes of the period.

Key Terms

- **apotheosis**: The fact or action of becoming or making into a god; deification.
- **decursio**: A Roman military exercise that involves the cavalry riding in a circle.
- **Dacia**: An ancient kingdom located in the area now known as Romania. The Dacian kingdom was conquered by the Romans and later named Romania after them.
- **frieze**: Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

Imperial Memorial

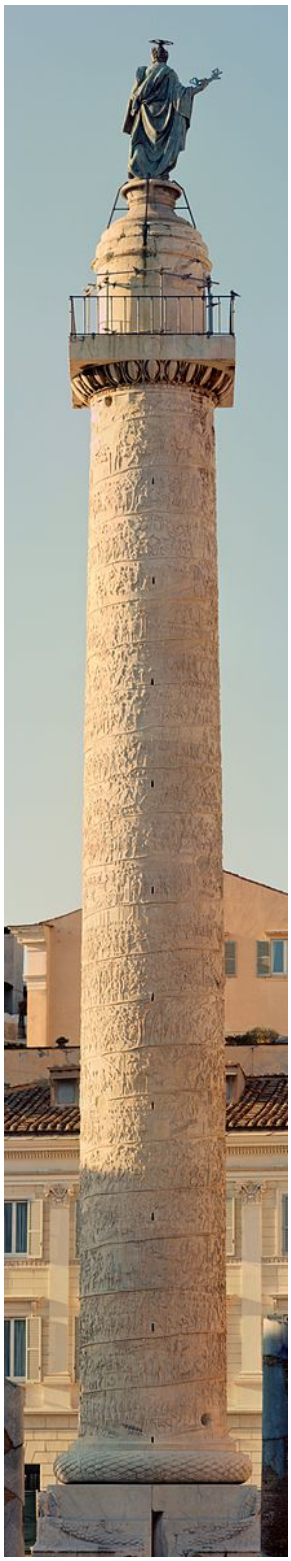
Trajan was born in Spain and rose to prominence in the Roman army during the reign of Domitian. He was a popular general who was adopted by the Emperor Nerva as his son and heir after Nerva realized he needed chose a successor who was liked by the people.

During Trajan's reign of nearly twenty years, from 98 CE to 117 CE, the Roman Empire reached its greatest territorial range. Trajan established large building programs both in Rome and throughout the empire.

Column of Trajan

Trajan and his architect Apollodorus of Damascus designed and built a large forum complex in the center of Rome. Standing between the libraries of the Forum of Trajan is a 128 foot tall victory column, known as the Column of Trajan. It stands on top of a large pedestal carved with a relief of the spoils of war.

The pedestal later served as a tomb for Trajan's ashes upon his death and deification. He is the first emperor to be buried inside the pomerium , the religious boundary around the city of Rome. A 625-foot frieze that depicts Trajan's two military campaigns against the Dacians is sculpted in a spiral relief that wraps around the column, from its bottom to its top.



Column of Trajan: The pedestal later served as a tomb for Trajan's ashes upon his death and deification. Located in Rome, Italy, c. 112 CE.

The frieze depicts over 150 episodes with more than 2,500 figures. The scenes show the Roman army preparing for war, including

scenes of moving the army, building fortifications, Emperor Trajan addressing the troops, battles, and the eventual surrender by the Dacians.

Only one quarter of the narration depicts battles, while the remaining panels depict scenes of preparation and other activities. The heavy emphasis on preparation, instead of battle, emphasizes the Romans' organization and the power behind the army.

The visual narration is depicted in low relief (bas relief) and relies little on naturalistic detail, preferring to show some scenes in multiple perspectives and with figures on different ground lines . Important characters, such as Trajan, reappear throughout the frieze and are easily identified.

Trajan himself appears 59 times, leading his troops as the head of the army and the empire. With the exception of the appearance of a few Victory figures and a river god, the Romans and Trajan are shown conquering the Dacians under their own power, through their own superiority over their enemy, without the help of divine intervention.

Detail from the Column of Trajan: This detail shows five registers or bands from the Column of Trajan.

Trajan's victory column was originally topped by an eagle and later with a statue of Trajan. The statue of Trajan eventually disappeared and was replaced in the sixteenth century by a bronze statue of St. Peter.

Scholars have recently called the legibility of the figures into question. Because of the column's location, nestled between the libraries and the basilica of the Trajan's Forum, the scenes, which are carved in low relief, are small and hard to read. It is uncertain how much of the column's relief Romans would have been able to see. There is some speculation whether knowledge of the idea of the narrative was more important than being physically able to read the narrative.

The Column of Antoninus Pius

Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161 CE), the first of the Antonine emperors, was the adopted son of Hadrian. His heirs, Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius, had a column erected to him on the Campus Martius, the base of which survives today.

On two of its sides is an identical scene of a military decursio depicting cavalry men parading around soldiers, two of whom hold standards. The relief carvings are high enough to protrude from the sides and be visible when viewing the non-decursio side of the pedestal. It depicts each figure from a ground-level perspective while showing the circular parade from a bird's eye view.

The pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius: This side shows the decursio scene. The relief carvings depict each figure from a ground-level perspective while showing the circular parade from a bird's eye view.

On one of the other two sides is a dedicatory inscription. On the opposite panel is a scene of the apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina. The scene depicts a large winged figure named Aion (Eternity) carrying the couple, surrounded by two eagles, to heaven.

Two figures look on from the ground. One is a personification of the Campus Martius, lounging on the ground with an arm around Augustus' sundial obelisk , the location where the ritual of deification occurred. The other is a personification of Rome, who appears as a woman wearing armor. She salutes the emperor and empress during their apotheosis, while leaning on a shield depicting the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus.

Pedestal of Column of Antoninus Pius.: The apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, c. 61 CE.

The Column of Marcus Aurelius

A victory column was also erected for Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 CE). This column is modeled on Trajan's column and was originally erected on the Campus Martius between the Temple of Divine Hadrian and the Temple of Divine Marcus Aurelius. A relief frieze encircles the column and depicts Marcus Aurelius's military campaigns at the end of his life in Germania.

Column of Marcus Aurelius: A detail of five bands from the column, circa 193 CE.

Despite the similar military scenes, the artistic style of the Column of Marcus Aurelius differs greatly from the Column of Trajan. The figures in this column are stockier and their proportions are distorted. The extra-large heads and deep relief carving were utilized so that the figures were easier to see from the ground than those on Trajan's column.

The military strength of the empire is emphasized more so than on the Column of Trajan, where the majority of the scenes depict the preparation for battle, instead of the battles themselves. The new style, high relief , and military emphasis demonstrates the changing priorities and social-political attitudes of the period.

Architecture under Hadrian

Hadrian was a great lover of architecture and the buildings he designed reflect attributes of his character.

Learning Objectives

Name the defining characteristics of Hadrian's building projects

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hadrian reigned from 117 to 138 CE. Under his reign, the port city of Ostia grew significantly, with its population inhabiting apartment blocks called insulae .
- Hadrian's general religious tolerance is reflected in the diversity of religious temples and even a Jewish synagogue in Ostia.
- The Arch of Trajan at Benevento depicts scenes often seen on triumphal arches , including scenes of military conquest, imperial piety and divinity, as well programs of building and social works that Trajan implemented.
- Hadrian built a mausoleum for himself and his family that became an imperial mausoleum over the next several generations.

Key Terms

- **cardo**: A north-south street in Ancient Roman cities.
- **insula**: The Latin term for Roman apartment-style housing.
- **triumphal arch**: A monumental arch that commemorates a victory.

- **decumanus**: An east–west-oriented road in a Roman city.
- **engaged column**: A column embedded in a wall and partly projecting from the surface of the wall, sometimes defined as semi- or three-quarter detached.
- **mausoleum**: A large, stately tomb or a building that houses such a tomb or several tombs.

Hadrian's Reign

Like Trajan before him, the emperor Hadrian had a long and successful career as an emperor of Rome , reigning from 117 to 138 CE.

Hadrian's time as emperor was marked with peace and relative stability throughout the empire. He was an active general in the military, both before and after becoming emperor, despite a lull in military conflicts during his reign. He worked to strengthen Rome's borders by building fortifications, outposts, and walls.

The most famous of these is Hadrian's Wall in Britainnia that marked the northern boundary of the empire on the isle. Hadrian also traveled extensively, enjoying new cultures , inspecting troops, and promoting military readiness.

Ostia

During Hadrian's reign, the port city of Ostia grew significantly, reaching over 75,000 inhabitants by the third century CE. Located at the mouth of the Tiber on the Tyrrhenian Sea, Ostia was the main port city of Rome. The city was first founded during the third century BCE, as one of Rome's earliest colonies.

The ruins of Ostia are from the city's imperial period when it was at the height of its prosperity. Since Rome was settled inland, Ostia was always an important component to the capital city, especially as the empire expanded and relied on its provinces for survival. Merchant vessels and large ships filled with grains, building materials, and other goods to sell in Rome docked at Ostia, where the goods were eventually transferred upriver.

Insulae

Ostia was a typical of a Roman city, including a large central forum , bath houses, temples, a theatre, barracks for firemen, and apartment buildings. The two central streets of the city, the cardo and decumanus , ran north–south and east–west through the city, intersecting at the forum—the center of the city's civic and religious activities.

The citizens of Ostia lived in apartment houses or insulae, which stood six or seven stories high. The insulae of Ostia demonstrate the cramped and noisy living style that was common in Roman cities. Shops, known as tabernae, occupied the ground level of the insulae, while the upper stories housed apartments.

Roman apartments varied in size from larger homes located on the lower floors with private dining and cooking areas, as well as private toilets, to small, cramped rooms with communal cooking areas and toilets on the upper floors.

Insulae at Ostia.: Insulae, or apartment blocks, in the city of Ostia.

Religion

Excavations at Ostia reveal a variety of temples and meeting sites for cults and rituals . This reflects the relative religious diversity within the Roman Empire. Common features throughout the Empire include the Capitolium, the temple dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, in the forum at the center of the city.

Across from the Capitolium in the forum stands a temple dedicated to Augustus and Roma. Within close proximity is the Temple to Hercules , and throughout the city are temples dedicated to gods related to shipping and commerce, as well temples built by guilds , such as the ship builders or the rope makers, for their patron gods.

On the city's outskirts, there is also a large sanctuary to the goddess Cybele or Magna Mater, attesting to her popularity in the city. The god Mithras was also popular among the Ostians and worshiped solely by men in the form of a mystery cult. Over 15 mithraea have been discovered in the city. These mithraea are nearly all built underground to replicate the cave central to the myths of Mithras. Hadrian's general religious tolerance is reflected in this religious diversity, including the presence of a Jewish synagogue.

The Capitolium at Ostia: This temple is dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, and is located in the forum at the center of the city.

The Arch of Trajan at Benevento

The Arch of Trajan in Benevento draws visual cues from the Arch of Titus at Rome. This arch, built between 114 and 117 CE, was erected over the Via Appia, one of Rome's most ancient roads through southern Italy, as the road entered Beneventum.

Like the Arch of Titus, the Arch of Trajan is ornately decorated with scenes of conquest and the deeds completed by Trajan. On both sides of the arch is a dedicatory inscription. The exterior is decorated with engaged columns and reliefs of Trajan's military conquest of Dacia , the extent of the Roman empire, and allegorical scenes of imperial power, as well as Trajan's good deeds as both a builder of public works and as the founder of a charitable institution for children in Roman Italy.

The Arch of Trajan at Benevento: View from the north. Benevento, Italy. 114–117 CE.

The two interior relief panels depict the religious activity of Trajan. One shows him making a sacrifice in one of Rome's oldest fora, the Forum Boarium, which was home of some of the city's oldest temples.

The other panel depicts Trajan being welcomed after his apotheosis by the Capitoline Triad. These two scenes depict Trajan's piety as well as the approval given him by the three most important gods in the Roman pantheon .

Hadrian's Mausoleum

Hadrian also built a large mausoleum for himself and his family on the right bank of the Tiber River in Rome. Its original design seems to have purposely recalled the Mausoleum of Augustus, located across the river on the Campus Martius.

The Mausoleum of Hadrian was a large cylinder topped by a garden and quadriga statue. A central room housed the ashes of Hadrian and his family, as well as several of the emperors who succeeded him. While Hadrian's Mausoleum still stands today, it was later converted into a residence and fortress under the Roman popes and now serves as a museum.

Hadrian's Mausoleum: The Mausoleum of Hadrian was a large cylinder topped by a garden and quadriga statue. A central room housed the ashes of Hadrian and his family, as well as several of the emperors who succeeded him.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 640px-Thermae_of_Villa_Adriana_panoramic.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5852156. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Lazio_Tivoli2_tango7174.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12447426%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Trajansmarket. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Trajansmarket.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pantheon. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Pantheon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Forum Traianii map. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forum_Traianii_map.PNG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Panteu00f3n de Roma alzado. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pante%C3%B3n_de_Roma_alzado.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hadrian's Villa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian%27s_Villa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hadrian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pantheon, Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantheon,_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Basilica Ulpia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_ulpia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trajan's Markets. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trajan's_Markets. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trajan's Forum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trajan's_Forum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apollodorus of Damascus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollodorus_of_Damascus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Exedra. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/exedra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oculus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/oculus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Forum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/forum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Definition of Coffered in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/coffered. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Quadriga. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quadriga. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Matronalivia2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Matronalivia2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Plotina_-_sestertius_-_RIC_0740.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5696753. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bust Hadrian Musei Capitolini MC817. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bust_Hadrian_Musei_Capitolini_MC817.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Busto de Vibia Sabina (M. Prado) 01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Busto_de_Vibia_Sabina_(M._Prado)_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marcus Aurelius Glyptothek Munich. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Marcus_Aurelius_Glyptothek_Munich.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Traianus Glyptothek Munich 336. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Traianus_Glyptothek_Munich_336.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nerva Tivoli Massimo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nerva_Tivoli_Massimo.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Faustina Minor Louvre Ma1144. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Faustina_Minor_Louvre_Ma1144.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Commodus Musei Capitolini MC1120. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Commodus_Musei_Capitolini_MC1120.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 480px-Antoninus_Pius_Glyptothek_Munich_337_Detail.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46590553. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Matidie 01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Matidie_01.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 415px-Lucius_Verus_-_MET_-_L.2007.26.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21497084. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Roman Hairstyles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_hairstyles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marcus Aurelius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aurelius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hadrian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antoninus Pius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoninus_Pius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lucius Verus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucius_Verus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Commodus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Commodus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Faustina the Younger. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Faustina_the_Younger. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aphrodite of Knidos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aphrodite_of_Knidos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vibia Sabina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vibia_Sabina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nervau2013Antonine dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerva%E2%80%93Antonine_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pompeia Plotina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeia_Plotina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hercules. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Hercules. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pericles. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Pericles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- umn.of.marcus.aurelius.arp.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Detail.from.column.of.marcus.aurelius.arp.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 220px-Trajans_column_from_SE.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajans_column_from_SE.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Relief Kolumna Trajana. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Relief_Kolumna_Trajana.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- antonina-2c-decursio-sx-01.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Base_della_colonna_antonina,_decursio_sx_01.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- -della-colonna-antonina-01.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Base_della_colonna_antonina_01.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Antonines. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/10513. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marcus Aurelius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aurelius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nerva-Antonine Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerva%E2%80%93Antonine_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Decursio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/decursio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Column of Marcus Aurelius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Column_of_Marcus_Aurelius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Column of Antoninus Pius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Column_of_Antoninus_Pius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apotheosis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/apotheosis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lucius Verus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucius_Verus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trajan's Column. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trajan's_Column. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trajan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trajan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dacia. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Dacia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frieze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/frieze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 006CastelSAngelo. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:006CastelSAngelo.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ostianinsula.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:OstianInsula.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- -arch-of-trajan-from-north.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benevento-Arch_of_Trajan_from_North.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ostia-antica-2006-09-08-n2.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Capitolium_Ostia_Antica_2006-09-08_n2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Triumphal Arch. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/triumphal_arch. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trajan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trajan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arch of Trajan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Trajan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ostia. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/8728. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Decumanus Maximus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Decumanus_Maximus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Engaged Columns. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Engaged_columns. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Cardo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hadrian's Wall. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian's_Wall. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hadrian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian%23Purpose. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Castel Sant'Angelo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Castel_Sant'Angelo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mausoleum. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mausoleum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 8.4: The Nervan-Antonines is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.5: The Decline of the Roman Empire

Architecture during the Severan Dynasty

The Severan Dynasty was the last stable period of imperial reign over the Roman Empire until that of Constantine.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Triumphal Arches of Septimius Severus, the Baths of Caracalla, and Caracalla's Serapeum on the Quirinal Hill

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Septimius Severus established the Severan dynasty and declared himself a son of Marcus Aurelius to legitimize his reign and depicted himself in the fashion of the last good emperor.
- The Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome visually relates to the triumphal arches of the city, especially the triple arch of Augustus, not only by commemorating a victory over the Parthians but by also using similar narrative conventions to establish Severan authority.
- The Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna, the emperor's hometown, is a unique four-sided arch that demonstrates both the new style of the Late Antique as well as the triumphal events of Septimius Severus's victory over the Parthians that occurred in Rome.
- The Baths of Caracalla were his major building program in Rome as a gift to the Roman people. The baths demonstrate the impressive and expansive use of Roman concrete, vaults , and architectural design.
- Caracalla's commission of a Serapeum , dedicated to an Egyptian god with Greek attributes, on the Quirinal Hill highlights the diversity reached in the Roman pantheon by the third century.

Key Terms

- **Serapeum**: A temple or sanctuary dedicated to the Egypto-Hellenic god Serapis.
- **mithraeum**: The place of worship for followers of Mirthras. It was often in a cave-like space that was underground, narrow, and lined with benches. Mithraea is plural for mirthraeum.

The assassination of Commodus in 192 CE once again plunged the Roman Empire into a year of civil war. Five generals succeeded one another until the fifth, Septimius Severus, consolidated power and managed to reign over Rome until his death from illness, 19 years later in 211 CE.

He established the Severan Dynasty that reigned until 235 CE, overseen by five different emperors. Unfortunately for Rome, the economy and the bureaucratic and administrative power of the Emperor and the Senate were declining during this time.

The five Severan emperors faced great difficulties maintaining control over the empire. Their troubles demonstrate the importance of this pivotal period that ultimately led to Rome's decline.

Septimius Severus

To strengthen his claim as emperor, Septimius Severus declared himself to be the secret son of Marcus Aurelius and even had his portrait fashioned in a similar manner to him. Like Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus wore his beard thick and curly in the style of Greek philosophers. His portraits show him as old, but fit and without the winkles of wisdom seen in Republican veristic portraiture.

Triumphal Arches of Septimius Severus

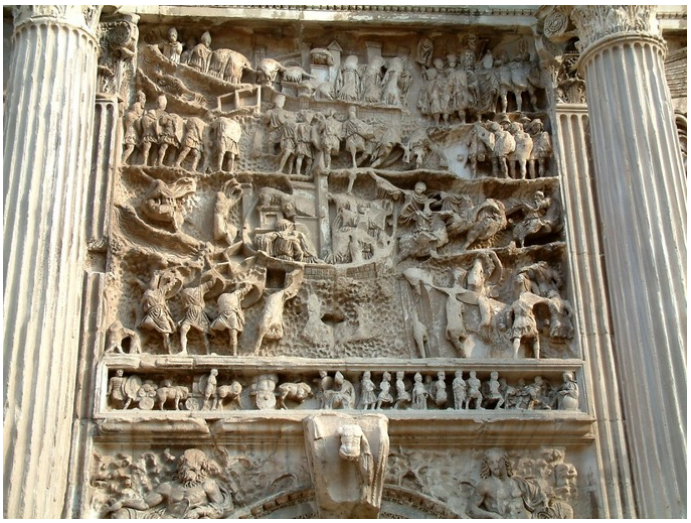
Two triumphal arches commissioned by Septimius Severus still stand today: the first at the northwest entrance to the Roman forum , and the second on the main road leading into the city of Leptis Magna, the Roman colony in modern Libya where Septimius Severus was born. Both were erected in 203 CE and commemorate the emperor's victory over the Parthians.

The Roman Arch of Septimius Severus recalls the triumphal arch of Augustus, also erected to honor his own victory over the Parthians. Like Augustus' arch, that of Septimius is a triple arch—the only surviving one in Rome.

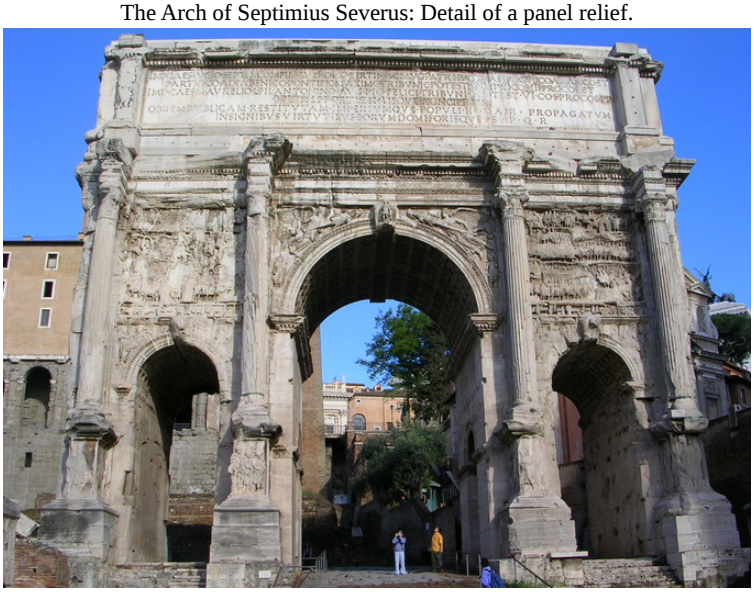
Decorative panels depict scenes of conquest echoing the military scenes on the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. These, however, depart from the Classical style, stylistically resembling more the figures on the Column of Marcus Aurelius. The figures on the panels are carved in high relief , and each shows multiple scenes.

Small friezes recounting the triumphal procession also frame the panels. Other decorative elements include winged victories in the spandrels and two sets of four columns, one on each side, that frame the archways.

The columns are free-standing, decorative additions to the arch. On the pedestal of each are reliefs of Romans leading captive Parthians away. This arch visually recalls the triumphal arches of the past that stood in the Roman Forum and expresses the continuity of Septimius Severus' imperial rule and the momentum of the empire.



The Arch of Septimius Severus: Detail of a panel relief.



The Roman Arch of Septimius Severus: This arch visually recalls the triumphal arches of the past that stood in the Roman Forum and expresses the continuity of Septimius Severus' imperial rule and the momentum of the empire.

The Arch of Septimius Severus at Leptis Magna is architecturally distinct and unique in comparison to the triumphal arches of Rome. This arch is four-sided and acts as a gateway into the city. Corinthian columns, eight in total, stand at each corner and support a broken pediment , a common architectural feature in the North African and Eastern provinces.

Despite its very different design, the arch's components are in dialogue with the triumphal arch in Rome. Depictions of war spoils and captive barbarians line the interior of the arches and a frieze wraps around them, depicting the triumphal procession that

occurred in Rome.

This frieze is both a portrayal of the actual triumph that Septimius Severus enjoyed as well as a mythical presentation, as gods and personifications are also present in the procession and at the sacrifice that followed.

Arch of Septimius Severus: The arch at Leptis Magnus demonstrates the emerging artistic style of the second century CE and Late Antiquity.

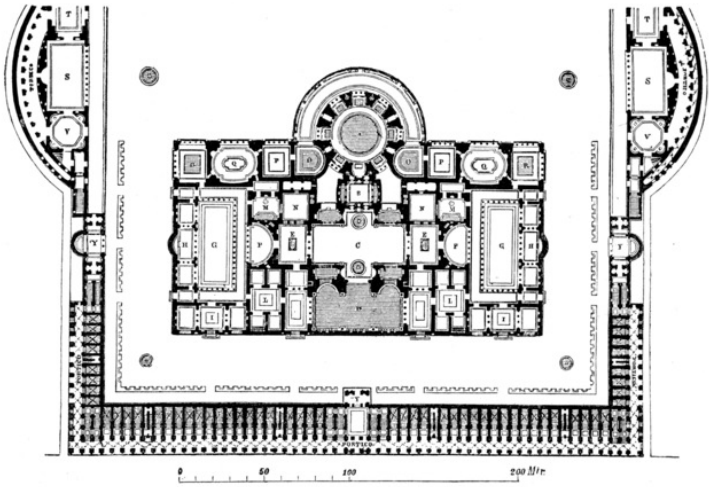
Most importantly, the arch at Leptis Magnus demonstrates the emerging artistic style of the second century CE and Late Antiquity . The figures in the frieze are squat and square. The limbs are thick, and their clothing is stylistically rendered with incised lines that give no indication of the body underneath. It is a complete displacement of the Classical style that dominated Roman art during the previous three centuries

Baths of Caracalla

Caracalla was one of the last emperors of the century who had the time, resources, and power to build in the city of Rome.

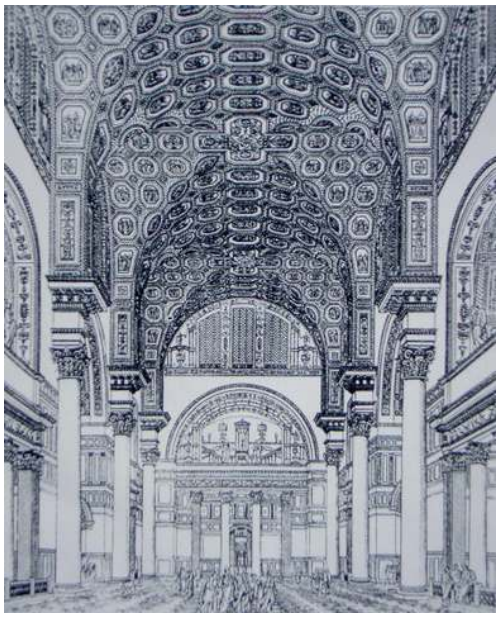
His longest-lasting contribution is a large bath complex that stands to the southeast of Rome's center. It covered over 33 acres and could hold over 1,600 bathers at a time. Bathing was an important part of Roman daily life, and the baths were a place for leisure, business, socializing, exercising, learning, and illicit affairs.

These baths not only held the traditional bathing pools but also exercise courts, changing rooms, and Greek and Latin libraries. A mithraeum has also been found on the site.



Baths of Caracalla: A reconstructed ground plan of this vast complex.

Architecturally, the Baths of Caracalla demonstrate the impressive mastery of Roman building and the importance of concrete and the vaulting systems developed by the Romans to create large and impressive buildings with ceilings that span great distances. The building was lavishly decorated with marble veneer, fanciful mosaics , and monumental Greek marble statues.



Baths of Caracalla: This artist's reconstruction shows a groin-vaulted interior, Composite columns, and decorative panels on the ceiling. Human figures have been added for scale.

Quirinal Hill Serapeum

In 212, Caracalla erected a temple (called a Serapeum) on Quirinal Hill dedicated to the Egyptian god Serapis, a human-headed deity who shared Greek and Egyptian attributes. This Serapeum was, by most surviving accounts, the most sumptuous and architectonically ambitious of those built on the hill.

The temple covered over three acres. It was composed by a long courtyard (surrounded by a colonnade) and by the ritual area, where statues and obelisks were erected. Designed to impress its visitors, the temple boasted columns nearly 70 feet tall and over six feet in diameter, sitting atop a marble stairway that connected the base of the hill to the sanctuary .

The ruins of the Serapeum show a mixture of brick and concrete with a regular use of the round arch. Symbolically, the temple signified the diversity that the Roman pantheon had reached by the third century.

Ruins of Caracalla's Serapeum on the Quirinal Hill: The ruins of the Serapeum show a mixture of brick and concrete with a regular use of the round arch.

Sculpture during the Decline of the Roman Empire

The Dominate Period, when warring generals controlled Rome, was a time marked by insecurity, anxiety, and a rapid succession of emperors.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the Late Antique style with earlier Classical conventions

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Portraits of the soldier emperors reflect the anxiety and fear the men probably felt with their lives in peril. The need to depict oneself as heroic, strong, and firm is also evident.
- The Crisis of the Third Century saw over twenty-five men claim the title of emperor and assume power over the empire.
- Sculpture during this time fully develops into the Late Antique style , which derives from second century CE plebeian art. An early instance of its use is seen on the Arches of Septimius Severus.
- The Late Antique style becomes simple, less realistic, and rejects Classical conventions that focused on naturalism and the proper rendering of the body and clothing in favor of simplicity and heavy, angular lines , squat bodies, and incised details.

Key Terms

- **Praetorian Guard**: The force of body guards used by Roman emperors.
- **adlocutio**: An address by a general (usually the emperor) to his massed army and a general salute from the army to their leader.
- **late antique**: The style of art that covers the transition from the Classical world and the civilizations of Greece and Rome into the Middle Ages. In terms of artistic style, it covers the transition from Roman to Medieval and Byzantine art.
- **Parthians**: An ancient Persian empire based in the northeast of modern day Iran.

After Caracalla

Emperor Caracalla was assassinated while campaigning against the Parthians in 217 CE. He was quickly succeeded by a member of his personal guard, Macrinus, who ruled for less than a year before his own death.

Elagabalus, the grandson of Julia Domna's sister, and his cousin Alexander Severus were the last in the Severan line. Both men managed to maintain control of Rome , and Alexander Severus was even able to improve the economic condition of the empire. Following Alexander's death at the hands of his own soldiers, Rome plunged into a long period of uneasy, rapid successions referred to as the Crisis of the Third Century, a crisis that lasted for fifty years.

Soldier Emperors

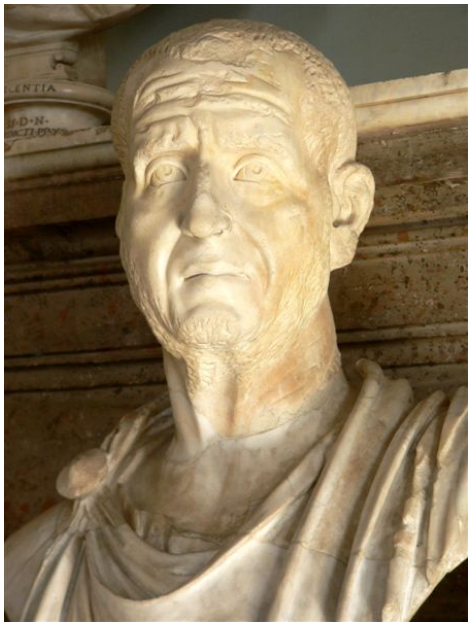
The first 26 emperors of this period were generals who either proclaimed themselves or were officially acknowledged as the emperor. Their reigns lasted from a couple of months to a couple of years. The fact that they were all generals in the Roman army underscores the military insecurity of the empire at this time.

Instead of protecting the border or trade routes, legions of soldiers were often fighting each other in support of one emperor or another. Since Roman power was still centered in Rome, the only building project that succeeded through this period was the building and maintaining of the city's Aurelian Wall, under the emperor Aurelian (r. 270–275 CE).

The portraits of Trajan Decius (r. 249–251 CE) and Trebonianus Gallus (r. 252–253 CE) serve to illustrate the instability of the period and the need for soldier-emperors to assert power to maintain some semblance of control.

Trajan Decius

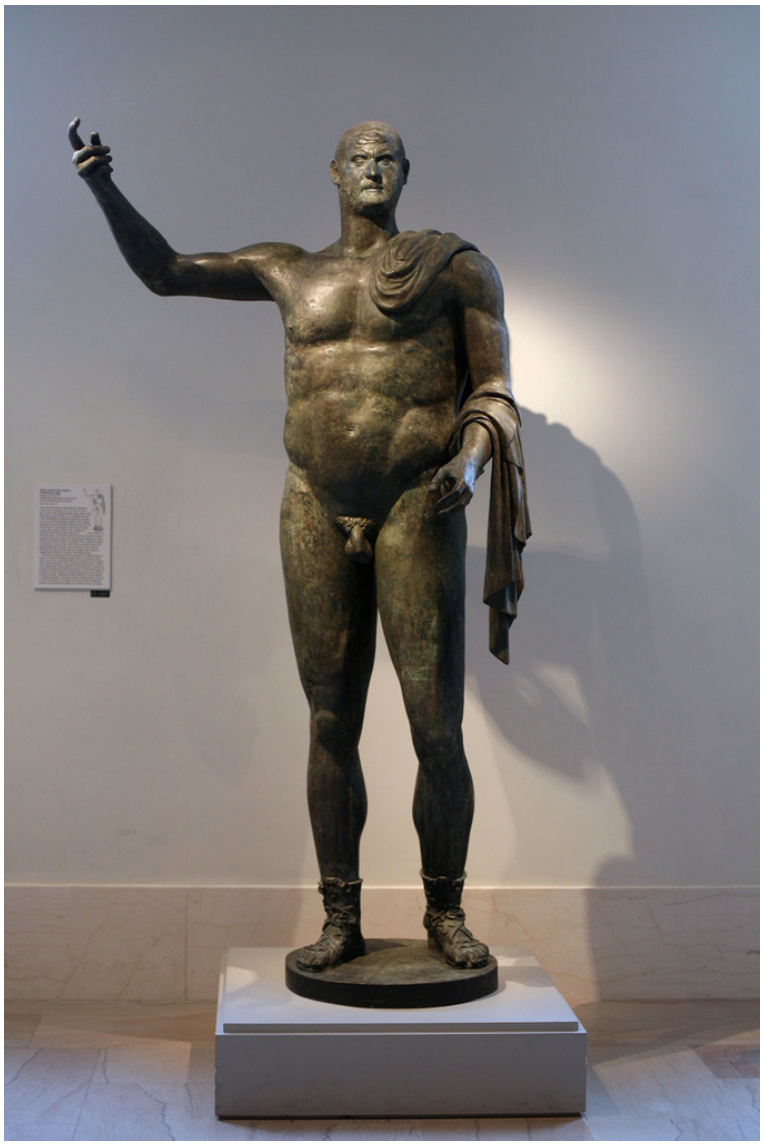
Trajan D's portrait at first seems to take its artistic style from Republican veristic portraiture, but a closer look reveals something else. Instead of depicting a hyper-realistic portrait of an old and wise man, this portrait reveals the anxiety and nervousness of the emperor. His brow is furrowed with worry and wrinkles, and his eyes and mouth impart a feeling of fear and anguish.



Trajanus Decius: Instead of depicting a hyper-realistic portrait of an old and wise man, this portrait reveals the anxiety and nervousness of the emperor.

Trebonianus Gallus

The portrait of his successor, Trebonianus Gallus takes a different style, relying on old sculpture and narrative conventions to depict the emperor as a contemporary hero. This larger-than-life bronze statue depicts a muscled, nude man with his right arm raised in a gesture of speech. He seems to be in adlocutio pose, addressing the troops or perhaps the people of Rome. His head is notably smaller than his torso and disproportional to his body. This places emphasis on his bulk and reminds the viewer of the emperor's power and the stability he hoped to create.



Trebonianus Gallus: This portrait takes a different style, relying on old sculpture and narrative conventions to depict the emperor as a contemporary hero.

Late Antique Art: The Ludovisi Sarcophagus

Sculpture during this period demonstrates the style and design of Late Antique art that was initially developed during the late second century CE from plebeian models. The emergence of the style corresponds with the social, political, and economic upheaval of the empire that began during the reign of Commodus.

This style removes Classical conventions of realism . It pushes its characters into the foreground and almost entirely removes the background.

In the scenes shown on the Ludovisi Sarcophagus, the undercutting of the deep relief exhibits virtuosic and very time-consuming drill work that conveys chaos and a sense of weary, open-ended victory. It differs from earlier battle scenes on sarcophagi in which more shallowly carved figures are less convoluted and intertwined.

Unlike earlier Roman depictions of warfare, this scene does not differentiate the general by his attire or engagement in battle. Rather, he is only slightly larger than the figures around him.

Ludovisi Sarcophagus: In the scenes shown on the Ludovisi Sarcophagus, the undercutting of the deep relief exhibits virtuosic and very time-consuming drill work that conveys chaos and a sense of weary, open-ended victory.

From the late second century, Roman art increasingly depicted battles as chaotic, packed, single-plane scenes that emphasize dehumanized barbarians who are subjected mercilessly to Roman military might, at a time when in fact the Roman Empire was undergoing constant invasions from external threats that led to the fall of the empire in the West. Although armed, the barbarian warriors, usually identified as Goths, are depicted as helpless to defend themselves.

After the Soldier Emperors

The Crisis of the Third Century continued after the reign of the Soldier Emperors as the title of emperor was auctioned off to the highest bidder by the Praetorian Guard and various men, not always generals, from around the empire seized power for brief periods of time. This process continued until the reign of Diocletian, beginning in 284 CE.

Imperial Sculpture under the Tetrarchy

Emperor Diocletian institutionalized the Tetrarchy, a co-rule that re-established stability in the empire for the period of Diocletian's reign.

Learning Objectives

Define the Tetrarchy as seen during Diocletian's rule

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Diocletian reigned from 284 to 305 CE as an individual emperor and as a member of the Tetrarchy .
- The Tetrarchy, or rule of four, was established by Diocletian as a means to administrate the empire more effectively. The four chosen men were given the title of Augustus for the senior emperor, or Caesar to designate the junior emperor.
- Portraits of the Tetrarchs depict four nearly identical men standing with their arms around each other to represent their solidarity, authority, and the stability that their reign brought to the empire.
- A portrait bust of the Tetrarch Galerius demonstrates the increasingly abstract direction in which portraiture was moving in the Late Antique period.

Key Terms

- **tetrarchy**: Historically, an empire that was ruled by four rulers.
- **porphyry**: A hard, igneous rock that consists of large crystals in a fine-grained matrix.

The Tetrarchy

Diocletian , a military general from the cavalry, was declared emperor by his legion in 284 CE. He re-established stability in the empire and paved the way for fourth-century political and social developments.

Portrait of Diocletian: Diocletian achieved stability by establishing the Tetrarchy, Greek for rule by four.

Diocletian achieved stability by establishing the Tetrarchy, Greek for rule by four. The Tetrarchy consisted of four emperors who reigned over two halves of the empire. Each pair of emperors was given control over either the eastern or western portion of the empire. Of the pair, one was given the title Caesar (a junior emperor) and the other Augustus (the senior emperor).

This allowed Diocletian and his fellow emperors to organize the administration of the provinces, separate military and civic command, and restore authority throughout the realm. They further solidified their commitment to each other and communal rule by marrying into each other's families.

Portraits of the Tetrarchs

Imperial portraiture of the Tetrarchs depicts the four emperors together and looking nearly identical. The portraiture symbolizes the concept of co-rule and cohesiveness instead of the power of the individual. The idea of the Tetrarchy, which is apparent in their portraits, is based on the ideal of four men working together to establish peace and stability throughout the empire.

The medium of the famous porphyry sculpture of the Tetrarchs, originally from the city of Constantinople, represents the permanence of the emperors. Furthermore, the two pairs of rulers—a Caesar and an Augustus with arms around each other— form a solid, stable block that reinforces the stability the Tetrarchy brought to the Roman Empire.

Portrait of the Tetrarchs: Portrait of the Tetrarchs from Constantinople; since the Middle Ages it has been fixed to a corner of the facade of St Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy.

Stylistically, this portrait of the Tetrarchs is done in Late Antique style , which uses a distinct squat, formless bodies, square heads, and stylized clothing clearly seen in all four men. The Tetrarchs have almost no body.

As opposed to Classical sculptures, which acknowledge the body beneath the attire, the clothes of the Tetrarchs form their bodies into chunky rectangles. Details such as the cuirass (breastplate), skirt, armor, and cloak are highly stylized and based on simple shapes and the repetition of lines .

Despite the culmination of this artistic style, the rendering of the Tetrarchs in this manner seems to fit the connotations of Tetrarch rule and need for stability throughout the empire.

Portrait of Galerius

Galerius served in the Tetrarchy from 293 to 311 CE, beginning his career as the Caesar of the West (293–305) under Diocletian, and eventually rising to Augustus of the West (305–311) after Diocletian's retirement.

During his reign he campaigned, aided by Diocletian, against the Sassanid (Neo-Persian) Empire, and sacked their capital in 299. He also campaigned across the Danube against the Carpi (in present-day eastern Romania), and defeated them in 297 and 300.

He opposed Christianity and oversaw the carrying out of the Diocletianic Persecution, which rescinded the rights of Christians and ordered that they comply with traditional Roman religious practices. However, toward the end of his reign in 311, he issued an edict of toleration.

A porphyry bust of Galerius (c. 300 CE) shows the direction that portraiture was taking in the fourth century. This bust from the emperor's palace features a face that is largely naturalistic with large expressive eyes and eyebrows, similar to those on the group portrait of the Tetrarchs, that lean toward abstraction.

These attributes follow those of other sculptures of the Late Antique style and foreshadow the increasingly geometric form that facial features would assume in imperial portraiture and sculpture in general.

Portrait Bust of Galerius: This bust from the emperor's palace features a face that is largely naturalistic with large expressive eyes and eyebrows, similar to those on the group portrait of the Tetrarchs, that lean toward abstraction.

Diocletian's Palace

Despite increasing abstraction in Late Antique sculpture, Diocletian's Palace maintains the tradition of Classicism in Roman architecture.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the significance of Diocletian's Palace and its contribution to Roman architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Diocletian abdicated from power and retired to his palace, an imperial villa built in the model of a military encampment known as a castrum .
- Diocletian's palace features numerous traditional attributes of Roman architecture, including Composite columns , round arches , and a domed ceiling with an oculus .
- The arcuated pediment in the Peristyle is a rare attribute in Roman architecture.
- The northern half of the palace was not as well preserved as the rest of the structure. Scholars can only form educated guesses as to its purpose.
- The presence of Egyptian sphinxes points to the former emperor's eclectic taste in decoration.

Key Terms

- **arcuated**: Describing a form containing a curve that makes it concave.
- **revetment**: A sloping structure placed on a bank or cliff in such a way as to absorb the energy of incoming water.

- **castrum**: Latin for camp or fortress; a military encampment planned in a square or rectangle with two main roads in each direction.
- **cardo**: A street that runs north to south in an ancient Roman city.

Diocletian's Palace

Diocletian abdicated power in 305 CE and left the Tetrarchy to his co-emperors and Severus, the newly inaugurated general. Diocletian then retired to his boyhood palace in Dalmatia.

The palace's remains became the center of the modern city of Spilt in Croatia. Diocletian's palace was built as a fortress, demonstrating that despite Diocletian's success as emperor, he still required security living in a hostile Roman environment. Despite the stylistic changes in sculpture , Diocletian's palace serves as a reminder that the style of Roman architecture continued to be based on Classical models and forms.

In addition to its numerous round arches and Classical columns, the palace also contains a vestibule with a domed ceiling that has an oculus somewhat reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome .

Vestibule: Note the domed ceiling with a wide oculus in Diocletian's Palace, in Split, Croatia, c. 305 CE.

The palace was set up in a similar fashion to a castrum and contained courts, libraries, and other features found in imperial villas. It was constructed from local materials including limestone , marble, and brick. Some material for decoration was imported: Egyptian granite columns, fine marble for revetments , and some capitals produced in workshops in the Proconnesos (present-day Marmara Island off the coast of Turkey).

The southern wall, which was the only unfortified part of the palace, was practically built on the waterfront and appeared to rise out of the Adriatic Sea.

Diocletian's Palace: An artist's reconstruction of the original structure.

Diocletian's palace demonstrates the Roman use of vaults in the substructure and the use of columns, peristyles, and entablatures to create monumental spaces . For example, the central court of the palace, known as the Peristyle, demonstrates the stylistic and monumental use of these architectural elements.

Furthermore, the central court was sunken and a flight of stairs enclosed the court and led up to the decorative Peristyle and surrounding rooms. This increased the feeling of monumentality while emphasizing Diocletian's imperial power, as members of the court had to stand several steps below the entrances to the temples, mausoleum , and court rooms.

The Peristyle at Diocletian's Palace: The arcuated pediment is a rare feature in Roman architecture. Resting on four Composite columns, the pediment contains a round arch that rises into its base toward its apex.

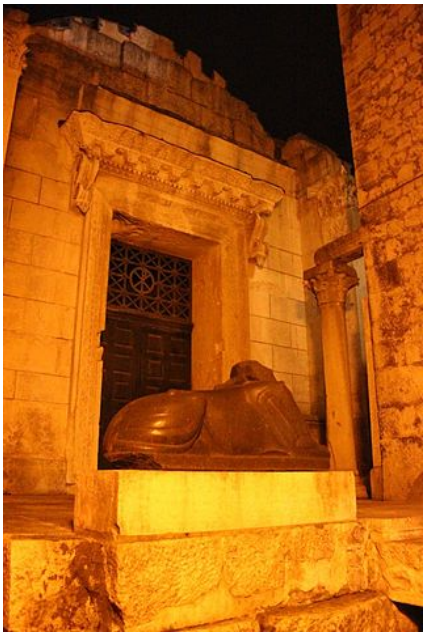
A main feature of the Peristyle is the portico that marks the entrance to Diocletian's private apartments. Following the format of a traditional Roman temple to a degree, the portico rests atop a raised platform. Behind it rests a marble-faced brick wall with three entrances: an archway flanked by a rectangular portal on each side.

Perhaps its most unique feature is the arcuated pediment that sits atop the temple facade. Resting on four Composite columns, the pediment contains a round arch that rises into its base toward its apex . An arcade supported by Composite columns stands to either side of the facade.

The northern half of the palace, divided in two parts by the cardo leading from the northern gate to the Peristyle, is not as well preserved as the rest of the palace. Scholars posit that each part was a residential complex that housed soldiers, servants, and possibly some other facilities. Both parts were apparently surrounded by streets. Leading to the perimeter walls there were rectangular buildings that were possibly storage magazines.

While the architectural aspects of the palace follow Roman traditions, several decorative choices hail from Egypt. Diocletian adorned his new home with numerous 3500-year-old granite sphinxes, originating from the site of Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III. Only three have survived the centuries. One is still on the Peristyle, the second sits headless in front of Jupiter's temple, and a third is in the city museum.

Sphinx from the tomb of Thutmose III: Diocletian adorned his new home with numerous 3500-year-old granite sphinxes, originating from the site of Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III.



Headless sphinx in front of the Temple of Jupiter: Located in Diocletian's Palace in Split, Croatia, c. 305 CE.

Architecture under Constantine

Constantine seized sole power over Rome to establish authority and stability, and then moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople.

Learning Objectives

Identify the actions and works of art that Constantine is most noted for

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Constantine reigned from 306 to 337 CE. He managed to re-establish stability in the empire and rule as a single emperor, legalize Christianity, and move the imperial capital to the newly-formed city of Constantinople.
- The Arch of Constantine, a triumphal arch commemorating Constantine's victory over Maxentius, makes use of spolia from monuments dedicated to Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius.
- Constantine completed the Basilica Nova, the construction of which was begun by his rival, Maxentius. This massive concrete building displayed the impressive power and authority of Constantine.
- At one end of the Basilica Nova sat the Colossus of Constantine: over 40 feet tall and made of marble, brick, wood frames, and bronze gilding. The Colossus further emphasized the sole authority, control, and power held by Constantine.
- After Constantine relocated, the city of Rome became vulnerable to barbarian hoards who pillaged local monuments and buildings. Outside Rome, Constantine oversaw the construction of the imperial district of Constantinople and the Aula Palatina in Trier (present-day Germany).

Key Terms

- **nave**: The central area of a basilica.
- **apse**: A semicircular recess covered with a hemispherical vault, also known as an exedra.
- **colossus**: A statue of gigantic proportions. The name was especially applied to certain famous statues in antiquity, such as the Colossus of Nero in Rome, and the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.
- **basilica**: A building having a nave with a semicircular apse, side aisles, a narthex, and a clerestory. The Roman design of the basilica became the model for Christian churches.
- **spolia**: The reuse of building material or decorative sculpture for new buildings or monuments. Latin for spoils.

Constantine

Diocletian and his co-emperor Maximian abdicated power on May 1, 305 CE. However, over the course of the next five years, Maximian made several attempts to regain his title, and then committed suicide in 310. In the meantime, power passed to Maximian's son Maxentius and Constantine, the son of a third co-emperor, Constantius.

Unfortunately for Diocletian's legacy and the stability created by the Tetrarchy , a power struggle between the two heirs erupted a year after the former Augustus' abdication. When Constantius died on July 25, 306, his father's troops proclaimed Constantine as Augustus in Eboracum (York, England).

In Rome, the favorite was Maxentius, who seized the title of emperor on October 28, 306. Galerius, ruler of the Eastern provinces and the senior emperor in the Empire, recognized Constantine's claim and treated Maxentius as a usurper. Galerius, however, recognized Constantine as holding only the lesser imperial rank of Caesar.

Despite a mutiny against Galerius' co-emperor Severus in 307, and Galerius's subsequent failure to take Rome, Constantine managed to avoid conflict for most of this period. However, by 312, Constantine and Maxentius were engaged in open hostilities, culminating in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which Constantine emerged victorious.

Although he attributed this victory to the aid of the Christian god, he did not convert to Christianity until he was on his deathbed. The following year, however, he enacted the Edict of Milan, which legalized Christianity and allowed its followers to begin building churches. With the Christian community growing in number and in influence, legalizing Christianity was, for Constantine, a pragmatic move.

Following a rebellion from Licinius, his own co-emperor in 324 CE, Constantine eventually had his former colleague executed and consolidated power under a single ruler. As the sole emperor of an empire with new-found stability, Constantine was able to patronize large building projects in Rome. However, despite his attention to that city, he moved the capital of the empire east to the newly founded city of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

Arch of Constantine

The Arch of Constantine demonstrates the continuance of the newly-adopted artistic style for imperial sculpture . This arch was erected between the Colosseum and Palatine Hill, the home of the imperial palace. It stands over the triumphal route before it

enters the Republican Forum . This forms a dialog with the Arch of Titus at the top, overlooking the Forum, and the Arch of Septimius Severus, which, in turn, stands at the other end of the Forum before the Via Sacra heads uphill to the Capitolium.

Arch of Constantine: The Arch demonstrates the continuance of the newly-adopted artistic style for imperial sculpture.

The Senate commissioned the triumphal arch in honor of Constantine's victory over Maxentius. It is a triple arch and its iconography represents Constantine's supreme power and the stability and peace his reign brought to Rome.

The Arch of Constantine is especially noted for its use of spolia: architectural and decorative elements removed from one monument for use on another. Those from the monuments of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius—all considered good emperors of the Pax Romana—were reused as decoration.

Trajanic panels that depict the emperor on horseback defeating barbarian soldiers adorn the interior of the central arch. The original face was reworked to take the likeness of Constantine. Eight roundels, or relief discs, adorn the space just above the two smaller side arches. These are Hadrianic and depict images of hunting and sacrifice .

The final set of spolia includes eight panel reliefs on the arch's attic, from the era of Marcus Aurelius, depicting the dual identities of the emperor, as both a military and a civic leader. The incorporation of these elements symbolize Constantine's legitimacy and his status as one of the good emperors.

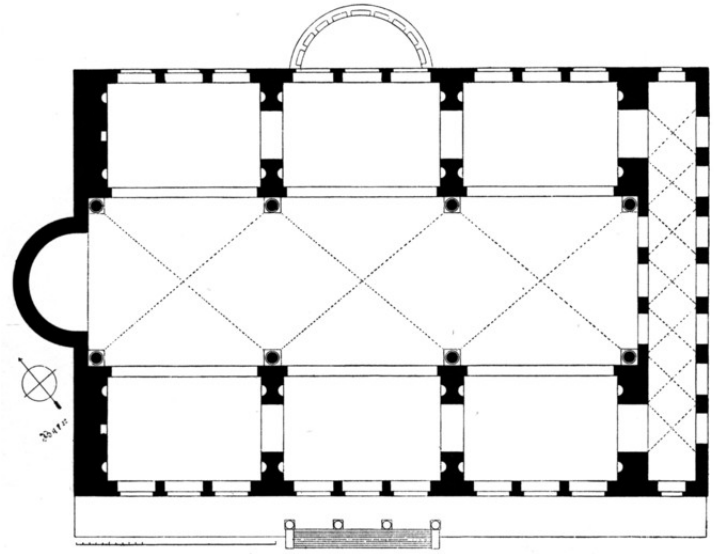
The rest of the arch is decorated using Late Antique styles. The proximity of different artistic styles, under four different emperors, highlights the stylistic variations and artistic developments that occurred, both in the second century CE, as well as their differences to the Late Antique style.

Besides the decorative elements in the spandrels , a Constantinian frieze runs around the arch, between the tops of the small arches and the bottoms of the roundels. This frieze highlights the artistic style of the period and chronologically depicts Constantine's rise to power. Unlike previous examples of Late Antique art, the bodies in this frieze are completely schematic and defined only by stiff, rigid clothes. In one scene, featuring Constantine distributing gifts, the emperor is centrally depicted and raised above his supporters on a throne .

A detail of the northern frieze of the Arch of Constantine: This detail shows Constantine distributing gifts from his throne down to his supporters.

Basilica Nova and the Colossus of Constantine

When Constantine and Maxentius clashed at the Milvian Bridge, Maxentius was in the middle of building a grand basilica. It was eventually renamed the Basilica Nova, and was located near the Roman Forum. The basilica consisted of one side aisle on either side of a central nave .



Basilica Nova: The ground plan of the Basilica Nova in Rome.

When Constantine took over and completed the grand building, it was 300 feet long, 215 feet wide, and stood 115 feet tall down the nave. Concrete walls 15 feet thick supported the basilica's massive scale and expansive vaults . It was lavishly decorated with marble veneer and stucco . The southern end of the basilica was flanked by a porch, with an apse at the northern end.

Basilica Nova: As it stands today in Rome, Italy.

The apse of the Basilica Nova was the location of the Colossus of Constantine. This colossus was built from many parts. The head, arms, hands, legs, and feet were carved from marble, while the body was built with a brick core and wooden framework and then gilded.

The head of the colossus of Constantine: The head is over eight feet tall and 6.5 feet long.

Only parts of the Colossus remain, including the head that is over eight feet tall and 6.5 feet long. It shows a portrait of an individual with clearly defined features: a hooked nose, prominent jaw, and large eyes that look upwards. Like the porphyry bust of

Galerius, Constantine's portrait combines naturalism in his nose, mouth, and chin with a growing sense of abstraction in his eyes and geometric hairstyle.

He also held an orb and, possibly, a scepter, and one hand points upwards towards the heavens. Both the immensity of the scale and his depiction as Jupiter (seated, heroic, and semi-nude) inspire a feeling of awe and overwhelming power and authority.

The basilica was a common Roman building and functioned as a multipurpose space for law courts, senate meetings, and business transactions. The form was appropriated for Christian worship and most churches, even today, still maintain this basic shape.

Rome after Constantine

Following Constantine's founding of a New Rome at Constantinople, the prominence and importance of the city of Rome diminished. The empire was then divided into east and west. The more prosperous eastern half of the empire continued to thrive, mainly due to its connection to important trade routes, while the western half of the empire fell apart.

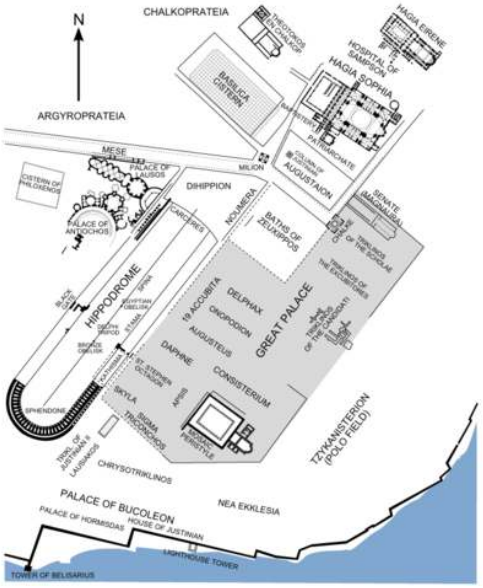
While Byzantium controlled Italy and the city Rome at times over the next several centuries, for the most part the Western Roman Empire, due to being less urban and less prosperous, was difficult to protect. Indeed, the city of Rome was sacked multiple times by invading armies, including the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, over the next century.

The multiple sackings of Rome resulted in the raiding of the marble, facades, décor, and columns from the monuments and buildings of the city. Parts of ancient Rome, especially the Republican Forum, returned once again to the cow pastures that they originally were at the time of the city's founding, as floods from the Tiber washed them over in debris and sediment.

Constantinople

Constantine laid out a new square at the center of old Byzantium, naming it the Augustaeum. The new senate-house was housed in a basilica on the east side. On the south side of the great square was erected the Great Palace of the Emperor with its imposing entrance and its ceremonial suite known as the Palace of Daphne.

Nearby was the vast Hippodrome for chariot races, seating over 80,000 spectators, and the famed Baths of Zeuxippus. At the western entrance to the Augustaeum was the Milion, a vaulted monument from which distances were measured across the Eastern Roman Empire.



The Imperial district of Constantinople: Present-day Istanbul, Turkey.

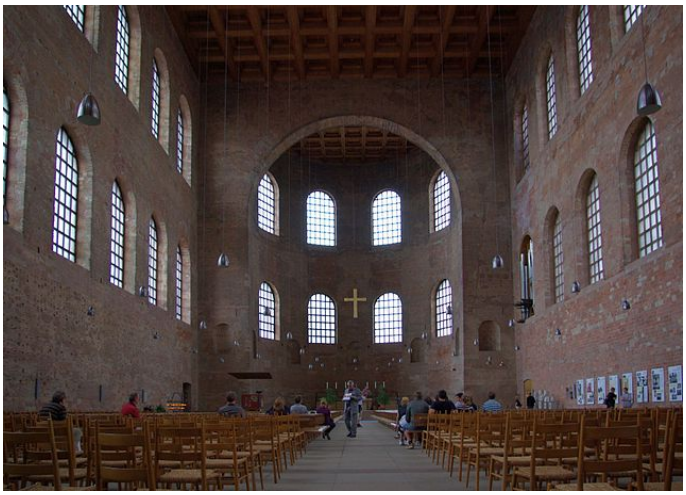
The Mese, a great street lined with colonnades , led from the Augustaeum. As it descended the First Hill of the city and climbed the Second Hill, it passed the Praetorium or law-court. Then it passed through the oval Forum of Constantine where there was a second Senate house and a high column with a statue of Constantine in the guise of Helios, crowned with a halo of seven rays and looking toward the rising sun. From there the Mese passed on and through the Forum Tauri and then the Forum Bovis, and finally up the Seventh Hill (or Xerolophus) and through to the Golden Gate in the Constantinian Wall.

The Aula Palatina, Trier, Germany

Constantine built the Aula Palatina (c. 310 CE) as a part of the palace complex. Originally it was attached to smaller buildings (such as an antehall, a vestibule, and service buildings) attached to it. The Aula Palatina has a simplified Roman basilica plan, consisting of a wide nave that ends in a north-facing apse.

Although round arches repeat throughout the interior and exterior, the building deviates from the traditional basilica with the flat ceiling that covers the nave and the flat roof that tops the apse.

Aula Palatina: Known today as the Church of the Redeemer in Trier, Germany, c. 310 CE.



Aula Palatina: The Aula Palatina has a simplified Roman basilica plan, consisting of a wide nave that ends in a north-facing apse.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Caracalla-Grundriss. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caracalla-Grundriss.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Tempio_di_Serapide_Gregoriana_6.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1433625. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Luk Septymiusza Sewera Detal 1DSCF0006. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luk_Septymiusza_Sewera_Detal_1DSCF0006.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Leptis Magna Arch of Septimus Severus. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leptis_Magna_Arch_of_Septimus_Severus.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 389px-Caracalla_innen.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1743800. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Arch of Septimus Severus East. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arch_of_Septimus_Severus_East.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Serapeum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapeum#Quirinal_Hill. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Serapis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arch of Septimius Severus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Septimius_Severus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Julia Domna. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Domna. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caracalla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracalla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arco di Settimio Severo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arco_di_Settimio_Severo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Leptis Magna. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Leptis_Magna. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arco di Settimio Severo (Leptis Magna). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arco_di_Settimio_Severo_(Leptis_Magna). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Septimius Severus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimius_Severus%23Marriages. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Year of the Five Emperors. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_of_the_Five_Emperors. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Alexander Severus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Severus%23Legacy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Severan Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Severan_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baths of Caracalla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baths_of_Caracalla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mithraeum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/mithraeum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MMA bronze 03. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MMA_bronze_03.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grande Ludovisi Altemps Inv8574. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grande_Ludovisi_Altemps_Inv8574.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Emperor Traianus Decius (Mary Harrsch). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Emperor_Traianus_Decius_(Mary_Harrsch).jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Adlocutio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Adlocutio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ludovisi Sarcophagus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludovisi_sarcophagus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trebonianus Gallus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trebonianus_Gallus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crisis of the Third Century. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_of_the_Third_Century. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barracks Emperor. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barracks_emperor. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dominate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Decius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Decius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Praetorian Guard. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/praetorian%20guard. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Late Antique. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/late%20antique. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Parthians. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/parthians. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 350px-Romuliana_Galerius_head.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4116605. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Istanbul - Museo archeol.n- Diocleziano (284-305 d.C.) - Foto G.nDall'Orto 28-5-2006. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul_-_Museo_archeol._-_Diocleziano_(284-305_d.C.)_-_Foto_G._Dall'Orto_28-5-2006.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Venice u2013 The Tetrarchs 03. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venice_%E2%80%93_The_Tetrarchs_03.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Galerius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Galerius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Diocletianic Persecution. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic_Persecution. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Portrait of the Four Tetrarchs. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_the_Four_Tetrarchs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tetrarchy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetrarchy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Diocletian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Porphyry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/porphyry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tetrarchy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tetrarchy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Sphinx_in_Split_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24833617. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Vestibule_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37856597. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Diocletian's_Palace_(original_appearance).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32215172. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- peristyle-split-2c-croatia.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interior_of_Diocletian's_Palace,_Split,_Croatia.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Jupiter's_Temple,_Split_1.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24834135. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Diocletian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Diocletian's Palace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian's_Palace. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Revetment. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Revetment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arcuated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/arcuated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Castrum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/castrum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- FriezeNorth5. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FriezeNorth5.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Trier_-_Aula_Palatina.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25780244. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Trier_Konstantinbasilika_BW_4.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4378862. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 424px-Constantinople_imperial_district.png. **Provided by**: WIKIMEDIA cOMMONS. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3623077. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Rome-Capitole-StatueConstantin. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rome-Capitole-StatueConstantin.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Dehio 6 Basilica of Maxentius Floor plan. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dehio_6_Basilica_of_Maxentius_Floor_plan.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Constantine arch Roma 2011 3. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantine_arch_Roma_2011_3.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roma Basilica Maxentius. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma_Basilica_Maxentius.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Romans after Constantine. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/11004. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Augustaion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustaion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hippodrome of Constantinople. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippodrome_of_Constantinople. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aula Palatina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aula_Palatina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Constantinople. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople#324.E2.80.93337:_Foundation_of_Constantinople. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spolia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spolia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arch of Constantine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Constantine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Basilica Nova. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_Nova. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maxentius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxentius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Battle of the Milvian Bridge. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Milvian_Bridge. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Constantine I. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Colossus of Constantine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_of_constantine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Basilica. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/basilica. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spolia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/spolia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Colossus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/colossus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 8.5: The Decline of the Roman Empire is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

8.6: Early Jewish and Christian Art

Early Jewish Art

Early Jewish art forms included frescoes, illuminated manuscripts and elaborate floor mosaics.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how the prohibition of graven images influenced the production of Jewish art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Jews, like other early religious communities, were wary of art being used for idolatrous purposes. Over time, official interpretations of the Second Commandment began to disassociate religious art with graven images .
- The zodiac, generally associated with paganism , was the subject of multiple early Jewish mosaics .
- An ancient synagogue in Gaza provides a rare example of the use of graven images in mosaics, depicting King David as Orpheus.
- Dura-Europos is the site of an early synagogue, dating from 244 CE.

Key Terms

- **Haggadah**: A text that sets forth the order of the Passover seder.
- **syncretic**: Describing imagery or other creative expression that blends two or more religions or cultures.
- **Tanakh**: The body of Jewish scripture comprising the Torah, the Neviim (prophets), and the Ketuvim (writings), which correspond roughly to the Christian Old Testament.
- **rabbinical**: Referring to rabbis, their writings, or their work.

The Second Commandment and Its Interpretations

The Second Commandment, as noted in the Old Testament, warns all followers of the Hebrew god Yahweh, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” As most Rabbinical authorities interpreted this commandment as the prohibition of visual art, Jewish artists were relatively rare until they lived in assimilated European communities beginning in the late eighteenth century.

Although no single biblical passage contains a complete definition of idolatry , the subject is addressed in numerous passages, so that idolatry may be summarized as the worship of idols or images; the worship of polytheistic gods by use of idols or images; the worship of trees, rocks, animals, astronomical bodies, or another human being; and the use of idols in the worship of God.

In Judaism, God chooses to reveal his identity, not as an idol or image, but by his words, by his actions in history, and by his working in and through humankind. By the time the Talmud was written, the acceptance or rejection of idolatry was a litmus test for Jewish identity. An entire tractate, the Avodah Zarah (strange worship) details practical guidelines for interacting with surrounding peoples so as to avoid practicing or even indirectly supporting such worship.

Attitudes towards the interpretation of the Second Commandment changed through the centuries. Jewish sacred art is recorded in the Tanakh and extends throughout Jewish Antiquity and the Middle Ages . The Tabernacle and the two Temples in Jerusalem form the first known examples of Jewish art.

While first-century rabbis in Judea objected violently to the depiction of human figures and the placement of statues in temples, third-century Babylonian Jews had different views. While no figural art from first-century Roman Judea exists, the art on the Dura-Europos synagogue walls developed with no objection from the rabbis.

Illuminated Manuscripts and Mosaics

The Jewish tradition of illuminated manuscripts during Late Antiquity can be deduced from borrowings in Early Medieval Christian art. Middle Age Rabbinical and Kabbalistic literature also contain textual and graphic art, most famously the illuminated Haggadahs like the Sarajevo Haggadah , and manuscripts like the Nuremberg Mahzor. Some of these were illustrated by Jewish artists and some by Christians. Equally, some Jewish artists and craftsmen in various media worked on Christian commissions.

Byzantine synagogues also frequently featured elaborate mosaic floor tiles. The remains of a sixth-century synagogue were uncovered in Sepphoris, an important center of Jewish culture between the third and seventh centuries. The mosaic reflects an interesting fusion of Jewish and pagan beliefs.

In the center of the floor the zodiac wheel was depicted. The sun god Helios sits in the middle in his chariot, and each zodiac is matched with a Jewish month. Along the sides of the mosaic are strips that depict the binding of Isaac and other Biblical scenes.

Mosaic floor at Sepphoris synagogue: This fifth-century mosaic is a depiction of the Zodiac Wheel.

The floor of the Beth Alpha synagogue, built during the reign of Justinian I (518–527 CE), also features elaborate nave mosaics. Each of its three panels depicts a different scene: the Holy Ark, the zodiac and the story Isaac's sacrifice . Once again, Helios stands in the center of the zodiac. The four women in the corners of the mosaic represent the four seasons.

Beth Alpha mosaic: The Byzantine synagogue at Beth Alpha features elaborate nave mosaics.

As interpretations of the Second Commandment liberalized, any perceived ban on figurative depiction was not taken very seriously by the Jews living in Byzantine Gaza. In 1966, remains of a synagogue were found in the region's ancient harbor area. Its mosaic floor depicts a syncretic image of King David as Orpheus, identified by his name in Hebrew letters. Near him are lion cubs, a giraffe and a snake listening to him playing a lyre .

A further portion of the floor was divided by medallions formed by vine leaves, each of which contains an animal: a lioness suckling her cub, a giraffe, peacocks, panthers, bears, a zebra, and so on. The floor was completed between 508 and 509 CE.

Gaza synagogue mosaic: This mosaic from the ancient synagogue at Gaza is an unusual example of figurative depiction in early Jewish art.

Dura-Europos

Dura-Europos, a border city between the Romans and the Parthians , was the site of an early Jewish synagogue dated by an Aramaic inscription to 244 CE. It is also the site of Christian churches and mithraea, this city's location between empires made it an optimal spot for cultural and religious diversity.

The synagogue is the best preserved of the many imperial Roman-era synagogues that have been uncovered by archaeologists. It contains a forecourt and house of assembly with frescoed walls depicting people and animals, as well as a Torah shrine in the western wall facing Jerusalem.

The synagogue paintings, the earliest continuous surviving biblical narrative cycle, are conserved at Damascus, together with the complete Roman horse armor. Because of the paintings adorning the walls, the synagogue was at first mistaken for a Greek temple. The synagogue was preserved, ironically, when it was filled with earth to strengthen the city's fortifications against a Sassanian assault in 256 CE.

Remains of the synagogue at Dura-Europos: This is the best preserved ancient synagogue to be uncovered by archaeologists.

The preserved frescoes include scenes such as the Sacrifice of Isaac and other Genesis stories, Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law, Moses leading the Hebrews out of Egypt, scenes from the Book of Esther, and many others. The Hand of God motif is used to

represent divine intervention or approval in several paintings. Scholars cannot agree on the subjects of some scenes, because of damage, or the lack of comparative examples; some think the paintings were used as an instructional display to educate and teach the history and laws of the religion.

A fresco depicting a scene from the Book of Esther: From the synagogue at Dura-Europos, c. 244 CE.

Others think that this synagogue was painted in order to compete with the many other religions being practiced in Dura-Europos. The new (and considerably smaller) Christian church (Dura-Europos church) appears to have opened shortly before the surviving paintings were begun in the synagogue. The discovery of the synagogue helps to dispel narrow interpretations of Judaism's historical prohibition of visual images.

Early Christian Art

Early Christian, or Paleochristian, art was created by Christians or under Christian patronage throughout the second and third centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the influence of Greco-Roman culture on the development of early Christian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early Christian, or Paleochristian, art was produced by Christians or under Christian patronage from the earliest period of Christianity to between 260 and 525.
- The lack of surviving Christian art from the first century could be due to a lack of artists in the community, a lack of funds, or a small audience.
- Early Christians used the same artistic media as the surrounding pagan culture . These media included frescos , mosaics , sculptures, and illuminated manuscripts .
- Early Christians used the Late Classical style and adapted Roman motifs and gave new meanings to what had been pagan symbols. Because the religion was illegal until 313, Christian artists felt compelled to disguise their subject matter.
- House churches were private homes that were converted into Christian churches to protect the secrecy of Christianity. The house church at Dura-Europos is the earliest house church that has been discovered.

Key Terms

- **syncretism**: The conveyance of more than one religion or culture, particularly in visual art.
- **Catacombs**: Human-made subterranean passageways used as burial locations.
- **domus ecclesiae**: A term that has been applied to the earliest Christian places of worship, namely churches that existed in private homes.

- **sarcophagus**: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.
- **canonical**: According to recognized or orthodox rules.
- **graven image**: A carved idol or representation of a god used as an object of worship.
- **cubicula**: Small rooms carved out of the wall of a catacomb, used as mortuary chapels, and in Roman times, for Christian worship.

Early Christianity

By the early years of Christianity (first century), Judaism had been legalized through a compromise with the Roman state over two centuries. Christians were initially identified with the Jewish religion by the Romans, but as they became more distinct, Christianity became a problem for Roman rulers.

Around the year 98, Nerva decreed that Christians did not have to pay the annual tax upon the Jews, effectively recognizing them as a distinct religion. This opened the way to the persecutions of Christians for disobedience to the emperor, as they refused to worship the state pantheon .

The oppression of Christians was only periodic until the middle of the first century. However, large-scale persecutions began in the year 64 when Nero blamed them for the Great Fire of Rome earlier that year. Early Christians continued to suffer sporadic persecutions.

Because of their refusal to honor the Roman pantheon, which many believed brought misfortune upon the community, the local pagan populations put pressure on the imperial authorities to take action against their Christians neighbors. The last and most severe persecution organized by the imperial authorities was the Diocletianic Persecution from 303 to 311.

Early Christian Art

Early Christian, or Paleochristian, art was produced by Christians or under Christian patronage from the earliest period of Christianity to, depending on the definition used, between 260 and 525. In practice, identifiably Christian art only survives from the second century onwards. After 550, Christian art is classified as Byzantine , or of some other regional type.

It is difficult to know when distinctly Christian art began. Prior to 100, Christians may have been constrained by their position as a persecuted group from producing durable works of art. Since Christianity was largely a religion of the lower classes in this period, the lack of surviving art may reflect a lack of funds for patronage or a small numbers of followers.

The Old Testament restrictions against the production of graven images (an idol or fetish carved in wood or stone) might have also constrained Christians from producing art. Christians could have made or purchased art with pagan iconography but given it Christian meanings. If this happened, “Christian” art would not be immediately recognizable as such.

Early Christians used the same artistic media as the surrounding pagan culture. These media included frescos, mosaics, sculptures, and illuminated manuscripts.

Early Christian art not only used Roman forms , it also used Roman styles. Late Classical art included a proportional portrayal of the human body and impressionistic presentation of space . The Late Classical style is seen in early Christian frescos, such as those in the Catacombs of Rome, which include most examples of the earliest Christian art.

Early Christian art is generally divided into two periods by scholars: before and after the Edict of Milan of 313, which legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire. The end of the period of Early Christian art, which is typically defined by art historians as being in the fifth through seventh centuries, is thus a good deal later than the end of the period of Early Christianity as typically defined by theologians and church historians, which is more often considered to end under Constantine, between 313 and 325.

Early Christian Painting

In a move of strategic syncretism , the Early Christians adapted Roman motifs and gave new meanings to what had been pagan symbols. Among the motifs adopted were the peacock, grapevines, and the “Good Shepherd.” Early Christians also developed their own iconography. Such symbols as the fish (*ikhthus)*, were not borrowed from pagan iconography.

Fish and Loaves: This fish-and-loaves fresco—iconography particular to Christians and representative of the Eucharist—is found in the Catacombs of San Callisto.

During the persecution of Christians under the Roman Empire, Christian art was necessarily and deliberately furtive and ambiguous, using imagery that was shared with pagan culture but had a special meaning for Christians. The earliest surviving Christian art comes from the late second to early fourth centuries on the walls of Christian tombs in the catacombs of Rome. From literary evidence, there might have been panel icons which have disappeared.

Depictions of Jesus

Initially, Jesus was represented indirectly by pictogram symbols such as the ichthys, the peacock, the Lamb of God, or an anchor. Later, personified symbols were used, including Daniel in the lion's den, Orpheus charming the animals, or Jonah, whose three days in the belly of the whale prefigured the interval between the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, the depiction of Jesus was well-developed by the end of the pre-Constantinian period. He was typically shown in narrative scenes, with a preference for New Testament miracles, and few of scenes from his Passion. A variety of different types of appearance were used, including the thin, long-faced figure with long, centrally-parted hair that was later to become the norm. But in the earliest images as many show a stocky and short-haired beardless figure in a short tunic , who can only be identified by his context. In many images of miracles Jesus carries a stick or wand, which he points at the subject of the miracle rather like a modern stage magician (though the wand is significantly larger).

Jesus Healing a Bleeding Woman: Typical of a depiction of Jesus for its time, this fresco depicts a clean-shaven man with short hair. From the catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter. , c. 300–350.

The image of The Good Shepherd, a beardless youth in pastoral scenes collecting sheep, was the most common of these images and was probably not understood as a portrait of the historical Jesus. These images bear some resemblance to depictions of *kouroi* figures in Greco-Roman art.

The Good *Shepherd*: A fresco from the catacombs of San Callisto.

The Good Shepherd: This painting of the Good Shepherd motif is a fusion of pagan and Christian symbolism.

The almost total absence from Christian paintings during the persecution period of the cross, except in the disguised form of the anchor, is notable. The cross, symbolizing Jesus's crucifixion, was not represented explicitly for several centuries, possibly because crucifixion was a punishment meted out to common criminals, but also because literary sources noted that it was a symbol recognized as specifically Christian, as the sign of the cross was made by Christians from the earliest days of the religion.

House Church at Dura-Europos

The house church at Dura-Europos is the oldest known house church. One of the walls within the structure was inscribed with a date that was interpreted as 231. It was preserved when it was filled with earth to strengthen the city's fortifications against an attack by the Sassanians in 256 CE.

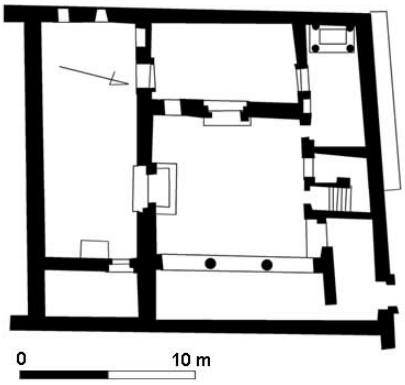
Remains of a house church at Dura-Europos: House churches, where Christians congregated secretly, were common prior to the legalization of Christianity.

Despite the larger atmosphere of persecution, the artifacts found in the house church provide evidence of localized Roman tolerance for a Christian presence. This location housed frescos of biblical scenes including a figure of Jesus healing the sick.

When Christianity emerged in the Late Antique world, Christian ceremony and worship were secretive. Before Christianity was legalized in the fourth century, Christians suffered intermittent periods of persecution at the hands of the Romans. Therefore, Christian worship was purposefully kept as inconspicuous as possible. Rather than building prominent new structures for express religious use, Christians in the Late Antique world took advantage of pre-existing, private structures—houses.

The house church in general was known as the *domus ecclesiae* , Latin for house and assembly. *Domi ecclesiae* emerged in third-century Rome and are closely tied to domestic Roman architecture of this period, specifically to the peristyle house in which the rooms were arranged around a central courtyard.

These rooms were often adjoined to create a larger gathering space that could accommodate small crowds of around fifty people. Other rooms were used for different religious and ceremonial purpose, including education, the celebration of the Eucharist, the baptism of Christian converts, storage of charitable items, and private prayer and mass . The plan of the house church at Dura-Europos illustrates how house churches elsewhere were designed.



Plan of the house church at Dura-Europos: Domi ecclesiae emerged in third-century Rome and are closely tied to the domestic Roman architecture of this period, specifically to the peristyle house in which the rooms were arranged around a central courtyard.

When Christianity was legalized in the fourth century, Christians were no longer forced to use pre-existing homes for their churches and meeting houses. Instead, they began to build churches of their own.

Even then, Christian churches often purposefully featured unassuming—even plain—exteriors. They tended to be much larger as the rise in the popularity of the Christian faith meant that churches needed to accommodate an increasing volume of people.

Architecture of the Early Christian Church

After their persecution ended, Christians began to build larger buildings for worship than the meeting places they had been using.

Learning Objectives

Explain what replaced the Classical temple in Early Christian architecture and why

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architectural formulas for temples were unsuitable, so the Christians used the model of the basilica , which had a central nave with one aisle at each side and an apse at one end. The transept was added to give the building a cruciform shape.
- A Christian basilica of the fourth or fifth century that stood behind an entirely enclosed forecourt that was ringed with a colonnade or arcade . This forecourt was entered from the outside through a range of buildings that ran along the public street.
- In the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire, churches tended to be centrally planned, with a central dome surrounded by at least one ambulatory .
- The church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy is a prime example of an Eastern, centrally planned church.

Key Terms

- **lunette**: A half-moon shaped space, usually above a door or window, either filled with recessed masonry or void.
- **presbytery**: A section of the church reserved for the clergy.
- **theophany**: A manifestation of a deity to a human.
- **prothesis**: The place in the sanctuary in which the Liturgy of Preparation takes place in the Eastern Orthodox churches.
- **fascia**: A wide band of material that covers the ends of roof rafters, and sometimes supports a gutter in steep-slope roofing; typically it is a border or trim in low-slope roofing.
- **basilica**: A Christian church building that has a nave with a semicircular apse, side aisles, a narthex and a clerestory.
- **cloister**: A covered walk, especially in a monastery, with an open colonnade on one side that runs along the walls of the buildings that face a quadrangle.
- **mullion**: A vertical element that forms a division between the units of a window, door, or screen, or that is used decoratively.

- **triforium**: A shallow, arched gallery within the thickness of an inner wall, above the nave of a church or cathedral.
- **diaconicon**: In Eastern Orthodox churches, the name given to a chamber on the south side of the central apse of the church, where the vestments, books, and so on that are used in the Divine Services of the church are kept.
- **clerestory**: The upper part of a wall that contains windows that let in natural light to a building, especially in the nave, transept, and choir of a church or cathedral.

Early Christian Architecture

After their persecution ended in the fourth century, Christians began to erect buildings that were larger and more elaborate than the house churches where they used to worship. However, what emerged was an architectural style distinct from classical pagan forms .

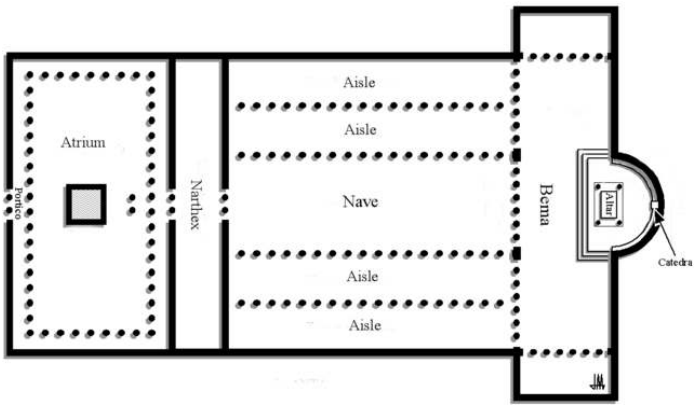
Architectural formulas for temples were deemed unsuitable. This was not simply for their pagan associations, but because pagan cult and sacrifices occurred outdoors under the open sky in the sight of the gods. The temple, housing the cult figures and the treasury , served as a backdrop. Therefore, Christians began using the model of the basilica, which had a central nave with one aisle at each side and an apse at one end.

Old St. Peter's and the Western Basilica

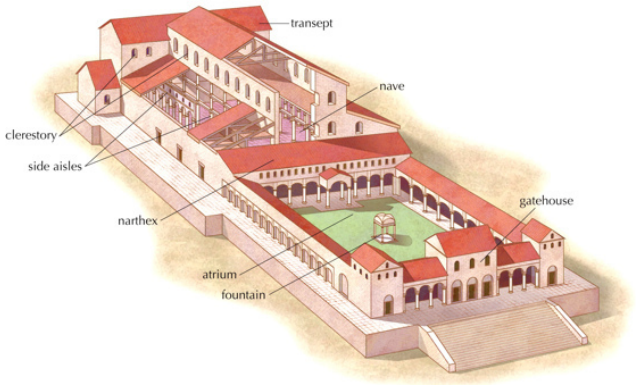
The basilica model was adopted in the construction of Old St. Peter's church in Rome . What stands today is New St. Peter's church, which replaced the original during the Italian Renaissance.

Whereas the original Roman basilica was rectangular with at least one apse, usually facing North, the Christian builders made several symbolic modifications. Between the nave and the apse, they added a transept, which ran perpendicular to the nave. This addition gave the building a cruciform shape to memorialize the Crucifixion.

The apse, which held the altar and the Eucharist, now faced East, in the direction of the rising sun. However, the apse of Old St. Peter's faced West to commemorate the church's namesake, who, according to the popular narrative, was crucified upside down.



Plan of Old St. Peter's Basilica: One of the first Christian churches in Rome, Old St. Peter's followed the plan of the Roman basilica and added a transept (labeled Bema in this diagram) to give the church a cruciform shape.



Exterior reconstruction of Old St. Peter's: This reconstruction depicts an idea of how the church appeared in the fourth century.

A Christian basilica of the fourth or fifth century stood behind its entirely enclosed forecourt. It was ringed with a colonnade or arcade, like the stoa or peristyle that was its ancestor, or like the cloister that was its descendant. This forecourt was entered from outside through a range of buildings along the public street.

In basilicas of the former Western Roman Empire, the central nave is taller than the aisles and forms a row of windows called a clerestory . In the Eastern Empire (also known as the Byzantine Empire, which continued until the fifteenth century), churches were centrally planned. The Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy is prime example of an Eastern church.

San Vitale

The church of San Vitale is highly significant in Byzantine art, as it is the only major church from the period of the Eastern Emperor Justinian I to survive virtually intact to the present day. While much of Italy was under the rule of the Western Emperor, Ravenna came under the rule of Justinian I in 540.

San Vitale: Unlike Western churches like St. Peter's, San Vitale consists of a central dome surrounded by two ambulatories. This is known as a centrally planned church.

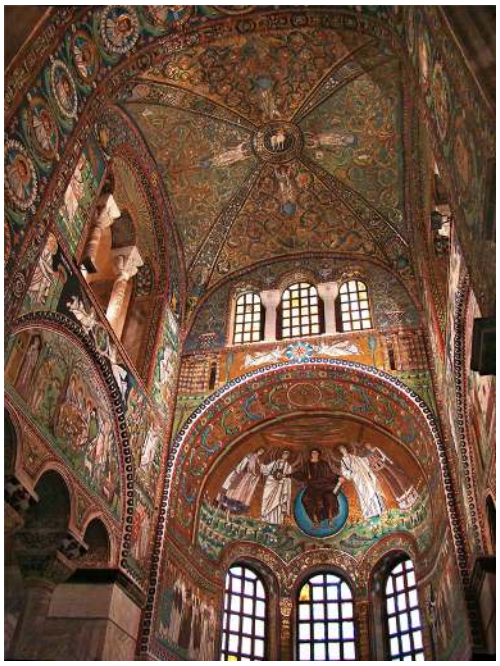
The church was begun by Bishop Ecclesius in 527, when Ravenna was under the rule of the Ostrogoths, and completed by the twenty-seventh Bishop of Ravenna, Maximian, in 546 during the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna. The architect or architects of the church is unknown.

The construction of the church was sponsored by a Greek banker, Julius Argentarius, and the final cost amounted to 26,000 solidi (gold pieces). The church has an octagonal plan and combines Roman elements (the dome, shape of doorways, and stepped towers) with Byzantine elements (a polygonal apse, capitals , and narrow bricks). The church is most famous for its wealth of Byzantine mosaics —they are the largest and best preserved mosaics outside of Constantinople.

The central section is surrounded by two superposed ambulatories, or covered passages around a cloister. The upper one, the matrimoneum, was reserved for married women. A series of mosaics in the lunettes above the triforia depict sacrifices from the Old Testament.

On the side walls, the corners, next to the mullioned windows, are mosaics of the Four Evangelists, who are dressed in white under their symbols (angel, lion, ox and eagle). The cross-ribbed vault in the presbytery is richly ornamented with mosaic festoons of leaves, fruit, and flowers that converge on a crown that encircles the Lamb of God.

The crown is supported by four angels, and every surface is covered with a profusion of flowers, stars, birds, and animals, specifically many peacocks. Above the arch , on both sides, two angels hold a disc. Beside them are representations of the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. These two cities symbolize the human race.



The presbytery at San Vitale: The cross-ribbed vault in the presbytery is richly ornamented with mosaic festoons of leaves, fruit and flowers that converge on a crown encircling the Lamb of God.

Sculpture of the Early Christian Church

Despite an early opposition to monumental sculpture, artists for the early Christian church in the West eventually began producing life-sized sculptures.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate Early Christian sculpture from earlier Roman sculptural traditions

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early Christians continued the ancient Roman traditions in portrait busts and sarcophagus reliefs , as well as in smaller objects such as the consular diptych .
- Such objects, often in valuable materials, were also the main sculptural traditions of the barbaric civilizations of the Migration period. This may be seen in the hybrid Christian and animal- style productions of Insular art .
- The Carolingian and Ottonian eras witnessed a return to the production of monumental sculpture. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, there are records of several apparently life-size sculptures in Anglo-Saxon churches.
- Monumental crosses sculpted from wood and stone became popular during the ninth and tenth centuries in Germany, Italy, and the British Isles.

Key Terms

- **diptych**: A pair of linked panels, generally in ivory, wood, or metal and decorated with rich sculpted decoration.
- **sculpture in the round**: Free-standing sculpture, such as a statue, that is not attached (except possibly at the base) to any other surface.

The Early Christians were opposed to monumental religious sculpture. Nevertheless, they continued the ancient Roman sculptural traditions in portrait busts and sarcophagus reliefs. Smaller objects, such as consular diptychs, were also part of the Roman traditions that the Early Christians continued.

Small Ivory Reliefs

Consular diptychs were commissioned by consuls elected at the beginning of the year to mark his entry to that post, and were distributed as a commemorative reward to those who supported his candidature or might support him in future.

The oldest consular diptych depicts the consul Probus (406 CE) dressed in the traditional garb of a Roman soldier. Despite showing signs of the growing stylization and abstraction of Late Antiquity , Probus maintains a contraposto pose. Although Christianity had been the state religion of the Roman Empire for over 25 years, a small winged Victory with a laurel wreath poses on a globe that Probus holds in his left hand. However, the standard he holds in his right hand translates as, “In the name of Christ, you always conquer.”

Consular diptych of Probus: Despite showing signs of the growing stylization and abstraction of Late Antiquity, Probus maintains a contraposto pose.

Carolingian art revived ivory carving, often in panels for the treasure bindings of grand illuminated manuscripts , as well as in crozier heads and other small fittings. The subjects were often narrative religious scenes in vertical sections, largely derived from Late Antique paintings and carvings, as were those with more hieratic images derived from consular diptychs and other imperial art.

One surviving example from Reims, France depicts two scenes from the life of Saint Rémy and the Baptism of the Frankish king Clovis. Unlike classical relief figures before Late Antiquity, these figures seem to float rather than stand flatly on the ground .

However, we can also see the Carolingian attempt to recapture classical naturalism with a variety of poses, gestures, and facial expressions among the figures. Interacting in a life-like manner, all the figures are turned to some degree. No one stands in a completely frontal position.

Carolingian treasure binding scenes from the life of Saint Rémy and King Clovis.: Note the Carolingian attempt to recapture classical naturalism with a variety of poses, gestures, and facial expressions among the figures.

The Revival of Monumental Sculpture

However, a production of monumental statues in the courts and major churches in the West began during the Carolingian and Ottonian periods. Charlemagne revived large-scale bronze casting when he created a foundry at Aachen that cast the doors for his palace chapel, which were an imitation of Roman designs. This gradually spread throughout Europe.

There are records of several apparently life-size sculptures in Anglo-Saxon churches by the tenth and eleventh centuries. These sculptures are probably of precious metal around a wooden frame.

One example is the Golden Madonna of Essen (c. 980), a sculpture of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus that consistes of a wooden core covered with sheets of thin gold leaf . It is both the oldest known sculpture of the Madonna and the oldest free-standing, medieval sculpture north of the Alps.

It is also the only full-length survivor from what appears to have been a common form of statuary among the wealthiest churches and abbeys of tenth and eleventh century Northern Europe, as well as one of very few sculptures from the Ottonian era.

In the Golden Madonna of Essen, the naturalism of the Graeco-Roman era has all but disappeared. The head of the Madonna is very large in proportion the remainder of her body. Her eyes open widely and dominate her nose and mouth, which seem to dissolve into her face. In an additional departure from classical naturalism, the Baby Jesus appears not so much as an infant but rather as a small adult with an adult facial expression and hand gesture.

Golden Madonna of Essen: This statue has a wood core covered by thin gold leaf, c. 980.

Sculpted Crosses

Monumental crosses such as the Gero Crucifix (c. 965–970) were evidently common in the ninth and tenth centuries. The figure appears to be the finest of a number of life-size, German, wood-sculpted crucifixions that appeared in the late Ottonian or early Romanesque period, and later spread to much of Europe.

Charlemagne had a similar crucifix installed in the Palatine Chapel in Aachen around 800 CE. Monumental crucifixes continued to grow in popularity, especially in Germany and Italy. The Gero Crucifix appears to capture a degree of Hellenistic pathos in the twisted body and frowning face of the dead Christ.

Gero Crucifix: This appears to be the earliest and finest of a number of life-size German wood sculpted crucifixions that appeared in the late Ottonian or early Romanesque period that later spread to much of Europe.

Engraved stones were northern traditions that bridged the period of early Christian sculpture. Some examples are Nordic tradition rune stones, the Pictish stones of Scotland, and the high cross reliefs of Christian Great Britain.

Large, stone Celtic crosses, usually erected outside monasteries or churches, first appeared in eighth-century Ireland. The later insular carvings found throughout Britain and Ireland were almost entirely geometrical, as was the decoration on the earliest crosses. By the ninth century, reliefs of human figures were added to the crosses. The largest crosses have many figures in scenes on all surfaces, often from the Old Testament on the east side, and the New Testament on the west, with a Crucifixion at the center of the cross.

Muiredach's High Cross (tenth century) at Monasterboice is usually regarded as the peak of the Irish crosses. Whereas the Carolingian treasure binding and the Gero Crucifix attempt to recapture the attributes of classical sculptures, the figures on Muiredach's High Cross lack a sense of naturalism.

Some have large heads that dwarf their bodies, and others stand in fully frontal poses. This departure from the classical paradigm reflects a growing belief that the body was merely a temporary shell for—and therefore inferior to—the soul.

Muiredach's High Cross: Muiredach's High Cross (tenth century) at Monasterboice is usually regarded as the peak of the Irish crosses.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 8.6: Early Jewish and Christian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: The Byzantines

9.1: Early Byzantine Art

9.2: Middle Byzantine Art

9.3: Late Byzantine Art

This page titled 9: The Byzantines is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

9.1: Early Byzantine Art

The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire began as a continuation of the Roman Empire but gradually became distinct through cultural changes.

Learning Objectives

Explain the rise and duration of the Byzantine Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

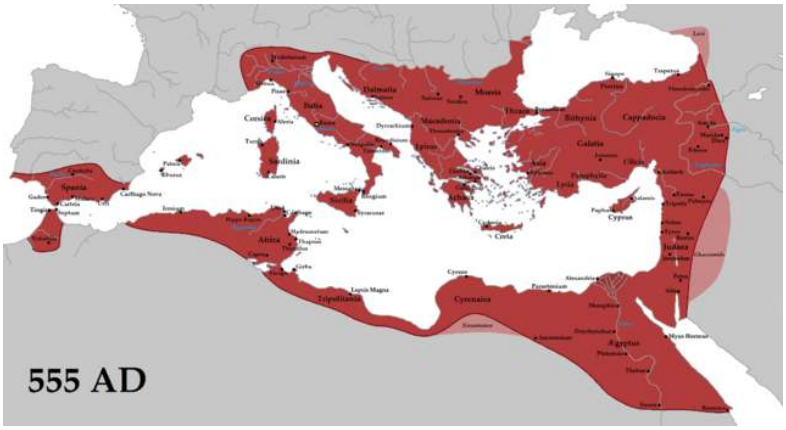
- The Byzantine Empire, so-called for the former name of Constantinople, was the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire. After the Western Empire fell in 476, the Byzantine Empire would continue for another millennium.
- Those living within the borders of the empire called themselves Romans, as opposed to Byzantines. Cultural shifts between them emerged with the change of the official language in the early seventh century, and the Byzantine split with the Roman Catholic Church in the eleventh century.
- The surviving Byzantine art is predominantly religious and follow traditional models that translate their carefully controlled church theology into artistic terms.
- Byzantine churches began in the style of many Western Roman churches but gradually shifted to centrally planned and then to Greek-cross structures over the course of the empire's history.

Key Terms

- **Greek-cross**: The dominant architectural form of middle- and late-period Byzantine churches, featuring a square center with an internal structure shaped like a cross, topped by a dome.
- **centrally planned**: Having a central nave with an aisle on either side separated by a colonnade, and an apse at one end.

The East–West Schism

After the death of Theodosius I in 395, the Roman Empire was divided into an Eastern half, based in Constantinople, and a Western, half based in Rome . Less than a century later, in 476, the last Western emperor Romulus Augustulus abdicated to a Germanic warlord who placed his own rule under that of the Eastern emperor. This act effectively ended the line of Western emperors and marked the end of the Western Empire. However, the Eastern portion (what historians call the Byzantine Empire) would continue for approximately another millennium.



The Byzantine Empire at its height: The Byzantine Empire (red) and its vassals (pink) in 555 CE during the reign of Justinian I.

The word Byzantine derives from Byzantium , the original name of Constantinople before Constantine moved the Roman imperial capital there in the fourth century. Despite this present-day appellation, those living within the borders of the Byzantine Empire did

not call themselves Byzantine. They continued to call themselves Romans and, until the early seventh century, continued to speak Latin. Even Roman Catholicism remained the official religion of the Byzantine Empire until the eleventh century.

In an effort to recreate a unified Roman Empire, Justinian I (r. 527–565) was able to reconquer most of the Mediterranean coast, including North Africa, Rome, and southern Spain. This swath of territory remained in the Byzantine Empire for two centuries.

A significant cultural shift occurred in the early seventh century when Heraclius (r. 610–641) replaced Latin with Greek as the official language of the Empire. This caused religious tensions with the church in Rome that began in the fourth century, and resulted in seven Ecumenical Councils over six hundred years. Finally, in 1054, the East–West Schism officially made the Eastern Orthodox Church, centered in Constantinople, its own separate entity from the Roman Catholic Church.

From the tenth century to the fifteenth, the empire experienced periods of peace and prosperity, as well as war and economic downturns. In the late eleventh century, the empire lost much of Asia Minor to the Turks, a temporary setback that foreshadowed the eventual weakening of Constantinople and the further loss of territory to the growing Ottoman Empire . In 1453, the Ottoman Turks invaded and captured Constantinople, bringing the Byzantine Empire to an end.

Byzantine Art and Architecture

Surviving Byzantine art is mostly religious and, for the most part, highly conventionalized, following traditional models that translate their carefully controlled church theology into artistic terms. Painting in frescos , mosaics , and illuminated manuscripts , and on wood panels were the main, two-dimensional media . Manuscript painting preserved some of the classical realist tradition that was missing in larger works. Figurative sculpture was very rare except for small, carved ivories .

Byzantine art was highly prestigious and sought-after in Western Europe, where it maintained a continuous influence on medieval art until near the end of the period. This was especially true in Italy, where Byzantine styles persisted in modified form through the twelfth century.

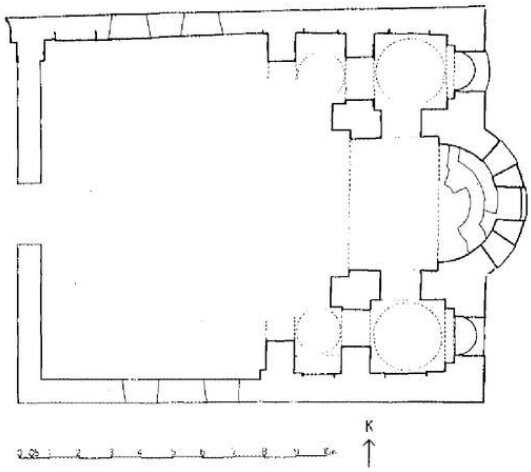
However, few incoming influences affected Byzantine style. By means of the expansion of the Eastern Orthodox church, Byzantine forms and styles spread throughout the Orthodox world and beyond.

Ascension scene from the Rabula Gospel: Miniatures of the sixth-century Rabula Gospel display the more abstract and symbolic nature of Byzantine art.

Early Byzantine architecture drew upon the earlier elements of Roman architecture. After the fall of the Western Empire, several churches, including the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and San Vitale in Ravenna, were built as centrally planned structures. However, stylistic drift, technological advancement, and political and territorial changes gradually resulted in the Greek-cross plan in church architecture.

Buildings increased in geometric complexity. Brick and plaster were used in addition to stone for the decoration of important public structures. Classical orders were used more freely. Mosaics replaced carved decoration. Complex domes rested upon massive piers , and windows filtered light through thin sheets of alabaster to softly illuminate interiors.

Influences from Byzantine architecture, particularly in religious buildings, can be found in diverse regions from Egypt and Arabia to Russia and Romania. Most of the surviving structures are sacred in nature; secular buildings are mostly known through contemporaneous descriptions.



Plan of the katholikon church of the Pelekete monastery: The plan of katholikon church provides the typical layout of Byzantine churches after the eighth century.

Architecture in the Early Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Emperor Justinian I launched an ambitious building program to develop holy sites to restore the glory of the Roman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Byzantine architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Christian architecture was a significant component of Justinian's project of imperial renovation.
- The church-building program of Justinian was intended to assist the Emperor in his mission of religious unification.
- Justinian hoped to recreate the glory of the Roman Empire, partly through his building projects in Constantinople.
- The Hagia Sophia was the most notable of Justinian's projects, intriguing scholars and architects for centuries and influencing the designs of religious architecture, particularly mosques .
- Justinian also ordered the construction of the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, and the reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Apostles. Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, who also designed the Hagia Sophia, designed both structures.

Key Terms

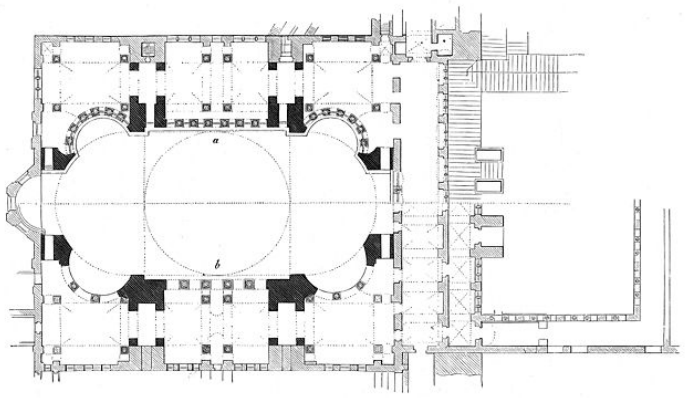
- **pendentive**: A constructive device that permits the placing of a circular dome over a square room or an elliptical dome over a rectangular space.
- **buttress**: An architectural structure built against or projecting from a wall that serves to support or reinforce the wall.
- **narthex**: An architectural element typical of early Christian and Byzantine basilicas and churches consisting of the entrance or lobby area, located at the west end of the nave.

Justinian I devoted much of his reign (527–565 CE) to reconquering Italy, North Africa, and Spain. During his reign, he sought to revive the empire's greatness and reconquer the lost western half of the historical Roman Empire. This attempt at restoration included an ambitious building program in Constantinople and elsewhere in the empire, and is the most substantial architectural achievement by one person in history.

Justinian I from San Vitale in Ravenna: Byzantine Emperor Justinian forcefully pushed for the spread of Christianity along with the expansion of his empire.

Hagia Sophia

One notable structure for which Justinian was responsible is the Hagia Sophia, or Church of Holy Wisdom, built by Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, both of whom would oversee most building projects that Justinian ordered within Constantinople. Like most Byzantine churches of this time, the Hagia Sophia is centrally planned , with the dome serving as its focal point.



Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles plan for the Hagia Sophia: a) Plan of the gallery (upper half); b) Plan of the ground floor (lower half).

The vast interior has a complex structure. The nave is covered by a central dome that at its maximum is over 180 feet from floor level and rests on an arcade of 40 arched windows. Although the dome appears circular at first glance, repairs to its structure have left it somewhat elliptical, with its diameter varying between 101 and nearly 103 feet.

An interior view of Hagia Sophia: The Emperor Justinian ordered the construction of Hagia Sophia in 532 CE.

The dome of Hagia Sophia has spurred particular interest for many art historians, architects, and engineers because of the innovative way the original architects envisioned it. The cupola is carried on four, spherical, triangular pendentives , an element that was first fully realized in this building.

The pendentives implement the transition from the circular base of the dome to the rectangular base below to restrain the lateral forces of the dome and allow its weight to flow downwards. They were later reinforced with buttresses .

At the western entrance side and the eastern liturgical side are arched openings that are extended by half domes of identical diameter to the central dome, and carried on smaller semi-domed exedras . A hierarchy of dome-headed elements creates a vast, oblong interior crowned by the central dome, with a span of 250 feet.

The Imperial Gate, reserved only for the emperor, was the main entrance of the cathedral . A long ramp from the northern part of the outer narthex leads up to the upper gallery, which was traditionally reserved for the empress and her entourage. It is laid out in a horseshoe shape that encloses the nave until it reaches the apse .

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the plan of the Hagia Sophia would significantly influence the construction and design of the Süleymaniye Mosque (1550–1557).

The Church of the Holy Apostles

The Church of the Holy Apostles, originally built under the purview of Constantine in 330, was no longer considered grand enough when Justinian ascended the throne. Because of this, the architects Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles designed and built a new church on the same site in the late 540s (consecrated in 550).

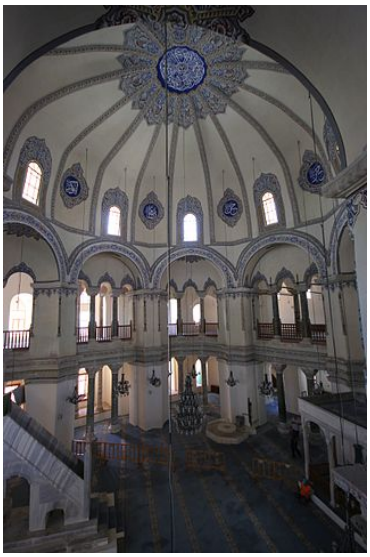
Like the original church, Justinian's replacement had a cruciform plan and and was surmounted by five domes: one above each arm of the cross and one above the central bay where the arms intersected. The western arm of the cross extended farther than the others to form an atrium . Because blueprints did not exist yet, and because the church was demolished shortly after the Ottoman conquest, the design details of the building are a matter of dispute.

The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus

The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus (527–536), known today as Little Hagia Sophia, was probably a model for the actual Hagia Sophia. It was recognized at the time as an adornment to all of Constantinople.

During the reign of Justinian's uncle Justin I, the future emperor faced accusations of conspiring against the current emperor and was killed for it. However, the Saints Sergius and Bacchus were said to intervene and vouched to Justin that his nephew was innocent. After the restoration of his title, Justinian commissioned Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles to construct the church as a gesture of thanksgiving.

When the church was built, it shared its narthex, atrium and propylaea with another church. It became one of the most important religious structures in Constantinople.



Little Hagia Sophia: A general view of the interior, looking south and west.

Painting in the Early Byzantine Empire

The Early Byzantine period witnessed the establishment of strict guidelines for the production of icons.

Learning Objectives

Contrast Early Byzantine representations of religious figures to those of earlier Christian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As Christians were able to practice their religion openly, paintings depicting the stories of martyrs became popular.
- Byzantine icons follow a strict code of symbolism based on color and imagery .
- Early Byzantine icons were wooden panels covered with encaustic paint. Icons from the sixth century and earlier were incredibly lifelike and sometimes caused veneration of the objects, as opposed to who the objects represented. This led to a fifth-century ban on the representation of secular imagery.

Key Terms

- **iconoclastic**: Pertaining to the belief in, participation in, or sanction of destroying religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.
- **icon**: An image, symbol, picture, or other representation that is usually an object of religious devotion.
- **pagan**: A person not adhering to any major or recognized religion; a follower of a pantheistic or nature-worshipping religion.
- **hagiography**: The study of saints.

Icon Painting

Icon painting, as distinct from other forms of painting, emerged in the Early Byzantine period as an aid to religious devotion. In contrast , earlier Christian art had relied more on allegory and symbolism. For example, earlier art might have featured a lamb or a fish rather than Christ in human form.

Before long, religious figures were being depicted in their human form to emphasize their humanity as well as their spirituality. While this issue would be debated and challenged during the later Iconoclastic period, for a time, images of the saints in icon paintings flourished.

After the adoption of Christianity as the only permissible Roman state religion under Theodosius I, Christian art began to change not only in quality and sophistication but also in nature. Paintings of martyrs and their feats began to appear, and early writers commented on their lifelike effect. Statues in the round were avoided as being too close to the principal artistic focus of pagan cult practices, as they have continued to be (with some small-scale exceptions) throughout the history of Eastern Christianity.

Icons were more religious than aesthetic in nature. They were understood to manifest the unique presence of the figure depicted by means of a likeness to that figure maintained through carefully maintained canons of representation. Therefore, very little room is made for artistic license.

Almost every aspect of the subject matter has a symbolic aspect. Christ, the saints, and the angels all have halos. Angels, as well as some depictions of the Holy Trinity, have wings because they are messengers. Figures have consistent facial appearances, hold attributes personal to them, and use a few conventional poses.

Use of Color

Color plays an important role, as well. Gold represents the radiance of Heaven. Red signifies divine life, while blue is the color of human life. White is the Uncreated Light of God, only used for scenes depicting the resurrection and transfiguration of Christ. In icons of Jesus and Mary, Jesus wears a red undergarment with a blue outer garment (God as Human), and Mary wears a blue undergarment with a red outer garment (humanity granted divine gifts). Thus, the doctrine of deification is conveyed by icons. Most icons incorporate some calligraphic text naming the person or event depicted. Because letters also carry symbolic significance, writing is often presented in a stylized manner.

Russian icon depicting the Holy Trinity: Christ, seated in the middle, wears a blue garment over a red one to symbolize his status as God made human. All three figures wear wings to signify their roles as messengers. The gold background places their location in Heaven.

Early Byzantine icons were painted in encaustic on wooden panel and, like Egyptian funerary portraits produced in the same media , they appeared very lifelike. Nilus of Sinai, in his fifth-century Letter to Heliodorus Silentiarius, recounts a miracle in which St. Plato of Ankyra appeared to a Christian in a dream. The Saint was recognized because the young man had often seen his portrait.

Veneration of Icons

This recognition of a religious apparition from its likeness to an image was also a characteristic of pagan, pious accounts of appearances of gods to humans and was a common theme in hagiography . During this period, the church began to discourage all non-religious human images, with the Emperor and donor figures counting as religious.

By the second half of the sixth century, there were isolated cases of direct veneration of the icons themselves, as opposed to the figures represented on them, due to continued claims of icon-associated miracles. This perceived misuse, in part, justified the banning and destruction of icons in the eighth century.

Icon of St. Peter : This icon of St. Peter, produced in encaustic, bears lifelike qualities that eventually vanished from icons in favor of more stylized imagery. This icon is from St. Catherine's Monastery at Mt. Sinai, circa sixth century.

Documentation exists to prove the use of icons as early as the fourth century. However, there are no surviving examples produced before the sixth century, primarily due to the period of Iconoclasm that ended the Early Byzantine period.

The surviving evidence of the earliest depictions of Christ, Mary, and the saints therefore comes from wall paintings, mosaics , and some carvings. Because Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) argued that no one knew the appearance of Jesus or that of Mary, the earliest depictions of Jesus were generic, rather than portrait images, and generally represented him as a beardless young man. Such an example can be seen in a mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, which houses the remains of the daughter of Theodosius I.

Christ as the Good Shepherd: This mosaic from the mid-fifth century is an example of a generic beardless Christ, as he might have appeared in contemporaneous icons. From the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, Italy, circa 450.

Mosaics in the Early Byzantine Empire

In the Byzantine period, a building's interior decoration often took the form of mosaic paintings, but with an added sense of spiritual drama that ordinary paintings could not convey.

Learning Objectives

Explain how the Byzantines used mosaics to convey a sense of spirituality in their architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mosaic tiles were more costly than the materials for traditional painting, and demonstrate the wealth of the Byzantine empire.
  The use of mosaics in Greek and Roman design was reserved for placement in the floor. Byzantine artists continued this precedent but also went further and adorned walls and ceilings with dramatic scenes.
- Mosaics in Middle Eastern locations like Mount Nebo and Mount Sinai provide examples of both dramatically spiritual and seemingly mundane imagery .
- The Italian city of Ravenna is the site of many of the great Byzantine structures that incorporated mosaic. The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and the Arian Baptistery are prime examples of the powerful impact and spiritual effect of the Byzantine-mosaic style .

Key Terms

- **tesserae**: Small square pieces of stone, wood, ivory, or glass used for making a mosaic.
- **mandorla**: A luminous cloud that surrounds the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary in traditional Christian art.
- **mosaic**: A piece of artwork created by placing colored squares (usually tiles) in a pattern to create a picture.
- **mausoleum**: A large, stately tomb or a building housing such a tomb or several tombs.

Mosaic Art

Mosaic art flourished in the Byzantine Empire from the sixth to the fifteenth centuries. Whereas in Antiquity , walls were usually decorated with less-expensive painted scenes, the Byzantine aesthetic favored the more sumptuous, glittering effect of mosaic decoration.

Some of the finest surviving Byzantine mosaics are preserved in the Middle East and in the Italian city of Ravenna. Mosaics were not a Byzantine invention. In fact, some of the most famous surviving mosaics are from ancient Greece and Rome .

The artists of the Early Byzantine period expanded upon precedent by celebrating the possibilities of the mosaic technique. They began to use it on wall surfaces as a type of painting technique in stone. Unlike traditional wall paintings, however, mosaics could create a glittering, shimmering effect that lent itself to a heightened sense of spirituality. The imagery befit the Byzantine culture that emphasized the authority of one, true religion.

The mosaic technique was more expensive than traditional wall painting, but its effects were so desirable as to make it worth the cost. Further, technological advances (lighter-weight tesserae and a new cement recipe) made wall mosaics easier than they had been in the preceding centuries, when floor mosaics were favored.

The mosaic technique involved fitting together small pieces of stone and glass (tesserae). When set together, the tesserae create a paint-like effect in which different colors meld into one another to create shadows and a sense of depth. Moreover, Byzantine artists often placed gold backing behind the clear glass tesserae, such that the mosaics would appear to emit a mysterious light of their own. This play of light added a sense of drama and spiritualism to the images that suited the symbolism and magic inherent in the Byzantine religious ceremony .

Mount Nebo, Jordan

Most often, however, mosaic decoration in the classical world was reserved for floor surfaces. Byzantine churches continued this tradition in locations such as Mount Nebo in Jordan, a medieval pilgrimage site where Moses is believed to have died.

The Church of Saints Lot and Procopius (founded 567 CE) has a richly tiled floor that depicts activities like grape harvesting. Seemingly mundane, the grape harvest could be symbolic of the wine component of the Eucharist. The mosaic is located in the baptistery, where infants were initiated into the Christian faith and, according to biblical teachings, be cleansed of Original Sin. Thus, a symbolic depiction of the next sacrament in the religion would help to underscore the theme of salvation.

Another Mount Nebo floor mosaic (c. 530) depicts four registers of men and animals. The first two registers are hunting scenes in which the men hunt big cats and wild boars with the help of domesticated dogs. On the bottom two registers, the animals appear more domesticated, peacefully eating fruit from trees as a shepherd observes them at the left; they wear leashes pulled by their

human masters. Among the domesticated animals are a camel and what appear to be a zebra and an emu. As in the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius, this mosaic likely has a religious message beneath its seemingly mundane subject matter.

Floor Mosaic from Mount Nebo: Hunting and grazing scenes from a floor mosaic in Mount Nebo, circa 530 CE.

Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai

Important Justinian-era mosaics (c. 548–565) decorate Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. In the apse is a depiction of the Transfiguration on a golden background, that denotes the otherworldliness of the event. Christ, standing in the center as the focal point, is crowned with a halo and surrounded by a mandorla as his awestruck apostles observe the event. The apse is surrounded with bands containing the medallions of Biblical apostles and prophets, and two contemporary figures who are identified as Abbot Longinos and John the Deacon.

Transfiguration of Jesus: Apse of the monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt, circa 548–565 CE.

Ravenna

Arian Baptistery

Inside the Arian Baptistery in Ravenna are four niches and a dome with mosaics that depict the baptism of Jesus by Saint John the Baptist. Although the mosaics were produced before Justinian I annexed Italy to the Byzantine Empire, their overall design is very similar to those produced under Byzantine rule.

Jesus is shown as a beardless, half-submerged youth in the Jordan River. John the Baptist, wearing a leopard skin, stands on the right, while the personification of the Jordan River stands to the left. Above, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove sprays holy water from its beak. Below, a procession of the Apostles, led in separate directions by Saint Peter and Saint Paul circle the dome, meeting at a throne with a bejeweled crucifix resting on a purple cushion.

Baptism of Jesus: Located in the Arian Baptistery, Ravenna, Italy, and created in the late fifth to the early sixth century.

It took the artists several years to complete these mosaics, as can be clearly seen from the different colors of the stones used to depict the grass at the feet of the apostles. The designs are quite simple, but the use of a gold background should be noted, as it was typically used in this era to infuse these simple scenes with an ethereal glow.

Mausoleum of Galla Placidia

The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is one of the earliest Byzantine buildings in Ravenna. While the exterior is plain, the interior is extensively decorated in elaborate mosaics. These mosaics create a truly spiritual space–a world removed from the ordinary. The vaulting is covered with floral motifs (possibly symbolic of the Garden of Eden) and the stars that stand out against a blue background seem to sparkle with their own mystical light.

Ceiling mosaic at the mausoleum of Galla Placidia: The Byzantines used mosaics more creatively and liberally than other cultures in the classical world.

Mosaics cover the walls of the vault , the lunettes , and the bell tower. The iconographic themes developed in the decorations represent the victory of eternal life over death. The inside contains two famous mosaic lunettes, and the rest of the interior is filled with mosaics of Christian symbols.

The central bay ‘s upper walls are decorated with four pairs of apostles, including Saints Peter and Paul, who acclaim a giant gold cross in the center of the dome against a blue sky of stars. Symbols of the four evangelists float among the clouds. The other four apostles appear in the barrel vaults of the transepts .

An internal view of the mausoleum of Galla Placidia: This early Byzantine structures demonstrates the intricate use of mosaics in Byzantine design.

Ivory Carving in the Early Byzantine Empire

Carved, ivory relief sculptures were central features of Early Byzantine art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ivory miniature sculptures of the early Byzantine period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ivory carving has a special importance to the Byzantine Empire because it has no bullion value and cannot be melted down or otherwise recycled. Elaborate ivory diptychs were central to the art of this period. Early Christians valued the small scale of these relief sculptures that contrasted with the monumental sculpture favored by pagans .
- The Barberini Diptych and the Archangel Ivory are two significant examples of ivory carving from the first half of the sixth century.
- Ivory panels were used as book covers, usually as a centerpiece that was surrounded by metalwork and gems. They were assembled from up to five smaller panels because of the limited width of the tusk. Carved ivory covers were used for treasure bindings on the most precious illuminated manuscripts .
- Western art gradually began to focus on monumental sculpture and ivory carving declined in importance. However, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, it remained significant.

Key Terms

- **diptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on two tablets, usually connected by hinges.
- **relief**: A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.

The Appeal of the Miniature

Ivory carving is the manual or mechanical carving of either animal tooth or tusk, wherein very fine detail can be achieved, and the surviving works often demonstrate intricate and complicated designs. This art form has a special importance to the history of Byzantine art because it has no bullion value and is not easily recycled like precious metals or jewels. Because of this, many ivory carvings from the Early Byzantine period still survive. Ivory diptychs, often elaborately decorated, were issued as gifts by newly appointed consuls.

In the Early Christian period, Christians avoided monumental sculpture, which was associated with the old pagan Roman religion and sculpted almost exclusively in relief. During the persecution of Christians, such reliefs were typically kept small in scale, no larger than the reliefs on sarcophagi.

Objects that were small-scale and lightweight are more easily carried and hidden, attributes that a persecuted class worshiping in secret would have found necessary. When Christianity was legalized and later became the official religion of the Empire these attitudes remained. As a result, small-scale sculpture—for which ivory was in many ways the best material—was central to art in a way that it rarely was at other times.

Consuls—civil officers who played an important administrative role until 541—gave Roman consular diptychs as presents. The form was later adopted for Christian use, with images of Christ, the Theotokos (the Virgin Mary), and saints. Such ivory panels were used as treasure bindings (elaborate book covers) from the sixth century, usually as centerpieces, and surrounded by metalwork and gems. These book covers were sometimes assembled from up to five smaller panels due to the limited width of the tusk. Carved ivory covers were used as treasure bindings on the most precious illuminated manuscripts.

The Barberini Diptych

The Barberini Diptych (c. 500–550 CE) is a Byzantine ivory leaf from an imperial diptych dating from Late Antiquity . It is carved in the style known as Late Theodosian, representing the emperor as triumphant victor .

Barberini Diptych: This is an early example of Byzantine ivory work, circa 500–550 CE.

The Barberini Diptych is attributed to an imperial workshop in Constantinople. The emperor depicted in it is usually identified as Justinian, or possibly Anastasius I or Zeno. Although it is not a consular diptych, it shares many features of their decorative schemes.

The emperor is accompanied in the main panel by a conquered barbarian in trousers to the left, and a crouching allegorical figure on the right that probably represents territory conquered or reconquered, and who holds his foot in gratitude or submission. An angel or Victory crowning the emperor with the traditional palm of victory, which is now lost.

The spear that partially conceals the barbarian does not wound him. He seems more astonished and overawed than combative. Above, Christ, with a fashionable, curled hairstyle, is flanked by two more angels in the style of pagan victory figures. He reigns above, while the emperor represents him below on Earth.

In the bottom panel barbarians from the West (left, in trousers) and East (right, with ivory tusks, a tiger and a small elephant) bring tribute, which includes wild animals. The figure in the left panel, apparently representing not a saint but a soldier, carries a statuette of Victory; his counterpart on the right is lost.

The Archangel Ivory

Dating to approximately the same period as the Barberini Diptych is the Archangel Ivory (c. 525–550 CE), the largest surviving half of an ivory diptych from the Early Byzantine period. The subject matter is an archangel, possibly Michael, who holds a scepter in his left hand and an orb capped with a cross in his right hand, which he extends in a gesture of offering .

This is the insignia of imperial power. Above the angel hovers a Greek cross surrounded by a laurel wreath, possibly signifying victory. Its missing half might have depicted Justinian I, to whom the archangel would be offering the insignia. It and the Barberini Diptych are the two most important surviving sixth-century Byzantine ivories attributed to the imperial workshops of Constantinople under Justinian.

Archangel Ivory: This is the largest surviving half of an ivory diptych from the Early Byzantine period.

The figure is depicted in a highly classical style, wearing Greek or Roman garb, and with a youthful face and proportions that conform to the ideals of classical sculpture. Although the architectural elements consist of a classical round arch supported by Composite columns , the space is more typically Byzantine in its bending of spatial logic.

The archangel's feet are at the top of a staircase that recedes from the base of the columns, but his arms and wings are in front of the columns. His feet are also not firmly planted on the steps. The top of the ivory bears a Greek inscription that translates as, "Receive this suppliant, despite his sinfulness;" it is possibly an expression of humility on the part of Justinian.

In the Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox world, the disapproval of large religious sculpture was to remain unchanged to the present day. However, in the West it was overcome, probably beginning with the court of Charlemagne in the ninth century. As large

monumental sculpture in other materials became more important, the centrality of ivory carving slowly lessened.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 513px-Pelekete_monastery2.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27701114. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Justinian555AD.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Justinian555AD.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 370px-RabulaGospelsFol13vAscension.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RabulaGospelsFol13vAscension.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Byzantine Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cross-in-Square. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-in-square. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Cathedrals and Great Churches. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_cathedrals_and_great_churches. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- East-West Schism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/East%E2%80%93West_Schism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roman Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire#History. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Interior_of_Sergius_and_Bacchus_Church-6.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28914811. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hagia Sophia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HagiaSophia_DomeVerticalPano_(pixinn.net).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Hagia-Sophia-Grundriss.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=387531. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Justinian I. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_Justinianus_I_-_Basilica_San_Vitale_(Ravenna).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Su00fcleymaniye Mosque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%BCleymaniye_Mosque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Church of the Holy Apostles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Apostles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Little Hagia Sophia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Hagia_Sophia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buttress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buttress. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Justinian I. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian_I. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Narthex. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Narthex. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pendentive. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pendentive. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art%23Early_Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Byzantine. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Byzantine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hagia Sophia. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Hagia_Sophia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 266px-Petersinai.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1076276. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 407px-Trinity_tikhon_filatiev.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7615573. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px--The_good_Shepherd-_mosaic_-_Mausoleum_of_Galla_Placidia.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4046999. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- icon. **Provided by**: Wikitionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/icon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wikitionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconoclasm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mausoleum_of_Galla_Placidia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nilus of Sinai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nilus_of_Sinai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Icon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon%23Emergence_of_the_Christian_icon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- EARLY ICONS. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ARTH401-2.3.1.1-Early-Icons-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Eastern Christianity. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern%20Christianity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hagiography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hagiography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pagan. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pagan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meister_des_Mausoleums_der_Galla_Placidia_in_Ravenna_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ravenna_1978_079.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Saint_Catherine's_Transfiguration.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1700698. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Nebo05(js).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3353205%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 488px-Arian_Baptistry_ceiling_mosaic_-_Ravenna.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39891909. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mandorla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandorla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mausoleum_of_Galla_Placidia#Architecture_and_interior_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Arian Baptistery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Arian_Baptistry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mosaic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Byzantine Mosaics in the Middle East. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Byzantine_mosaics_in_the_Middle_East. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MOSAIC DECORATION IN BYZANTINE RAVENNA. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ARTH401-2.2.2-Mosaic-Decoration-in-Byzantine-Ravenna-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- Tesserae. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tesserae. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mausoleum. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mausoleum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Byzantine_ivory_801.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6043083. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barberini Ivory. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diptych_Barberini_Louvre_OA9063_whole.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Archangel Ivory. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Archangel_ivory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art%23Early_Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Treasure Binding. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Treasure_binding. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ivory Carving. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/4714. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barberini Ivory. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barberini_Ivory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ivory Carving. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_carving%23Antiquity_and_the_Early_Medieval_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Diptych. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 9.1: Early Byzantine Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

9.2: Middle Byzantine Art

Architecture and Mosaics in the Middle Byzantine Empire

Architecture and mosaic decoration thrived during the Middle Byzantine period that followed Iconoclasm's stifling of the arts.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics and innovations of Byzantine religious art that followed the end of the Iconoclasm controversy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Two periods of state-sanctioned iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries ended the Early Byzantine period that led to the prohibition and destruction of religious images. Iconoclasm ended in 843, leading to the renewal of churches through decorative and figurative mosaics and frescos . New elements and styles began to emerge during the Middle Byzantine period under the rule of the Macedonian emperors.
- The Theotokos mosaic of the Virgin and Child, in the central apse of the Hagia Sophia, is believed to reconstruct an earlier sixth century mosaic destroyed during Iconoclasm. It combines the Early Byzantine style with the new development of softer folds, increased modeling, and the addition of perspective .
- At the Hosios Loukas monastery in Greece are two connected churches that combine the older use of pendentives and the newer use of squinches beneath their domes . The monastery's mosaics depict figures in a more schematic manner and on flat, gold backgrounds with little hints about the setting.
- Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice , Italy, is a Greek cross-plan church richly decorated in marble revetment , pattern stone floors, and a detailed and extensive program of mosaics.

Key Terms

- **squinch**: A structure constructed between two adjacent walls to aid in the transition from a polygonal to a circular structure; as when a dome is constructed on top of a square room.
- **aniconic**: Opposed to the use and veneration of images, especially religious images.
- **pendentive**: The concave triangular section of vaulting that provides transition between a dome and the square base on which it is set, and transfers the weight of the dome.
- **Katholikon**: The major temple or church building of a monastery or diocese in an Eastern Orthodox Church.
- **Pantocrator**: The ruler of everything, especially as an epithet for Jesus Christ; an artistic depiction of Jesus in this aspect.
- **iconoclasm**: The belief in, participation in, or sanction of destroying religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.

The First and Second Iconoclasms

Broadly defined, iconoclasm is defined as the destruction of images. In Christianity, iconoclasm has generally been motivated by people who adopt a literal interpretation of the Ten Commandments, which forbid the making and worshipping of graven images . The period after the reign of Justinian I (527–565) witnessed a significant increase in the use and veneration of images, which helped to trigger a religious and political crisis in the empire. As a result, aniconic sentiment grew, culminating in two periods of iconoclasm—the First Iconoclasm (726–87) and the Second Iconoclasm (814–42)—which brought the Early Byzantine period to an end.

Byzantine Iconoclasm constituted a ban on religious images by Emperor Leo III and continued under his successors. It was accompanied by the widespread destruction of images and persecution of supporters of the veneration of images. The goal of the iconoclasts was to restore the church to a strict opposition to images in worship that they believed characterized at the least some parts of the early church.

The Feast of Orthodoxy

After the death of the last Iconoclast emperor Theophilos, his young son Michael III, with his mother the regent Theodora and Patriarch Methodios, summoned the Synod of Constantinople in 843 to bring peace to the Church. At the end of the first session, on the first day of Lent, all made a triumphal procession from the Church of Blachernae to Hagia Sophiato to restore the icons to the church in an event called the Feast of Orthodoxy.

Imagery , it was decided, is an integral part of faith and devotion, making present to the believer the person or event depicted on them. However, the Orthodox makes a clear doctrinal distinction between the veneration paid to icons and the worship which is due to God alone.

Since Iconoclasm was the last of the great Christological controversies to trouble the Church, its defeat is considered to be the final triumph of the Church over heresy. When the Iconoclasm controversy came to an end in 843, Byzantine religious art underwent a renewal.

A series of naturalistic innovations can be seen in examples from the Hagia Sophia, the monastery of Hosios Loukas, and Saint Mark's Basilica. This revival of a classical style of art was partly due to a renewed interest in classical culture , which accompanied a period of military successes, during the Macedonian Renaissance (867–1056).

Theotokos Mosaic at the Hagia Sophia

The Hagia Sophia is a former Greek Orthodox patriarchal basilica (church), constructed from 537 until 1453. A combination of a centrally planned and basilican building, it is considered the epitome of Byzantine architecture.

After the end of iconoclasm, a new mosaic was dedicated in the Hagia Sophia under the Patriarch Photius and the Macedonian emperors Michael III and Basil I. The mosaic is located in the apse over the main alter and depicts the Theotokos, or the Mother of God. The image, in which the Virgin Mary sits on a throne with the Christ child on her lap, is believed to be a reconstruction of a sixth-century mosaic that was destroyed during the Iconoclasm.

An inscription reads: "The images which the impostors had cast down here, pious emperors (Michael and Basil) have again set up." This inscription refers to the recent past and the renewal of Byzantine art under the Macedonian emperors.

Theokotos and Child: This image, in which the Virgin Mary sits on a throne with the Christ Child, is believed to be a reconstruction of a sixth-century mosaic that was destroyed during the Iconoclasm.

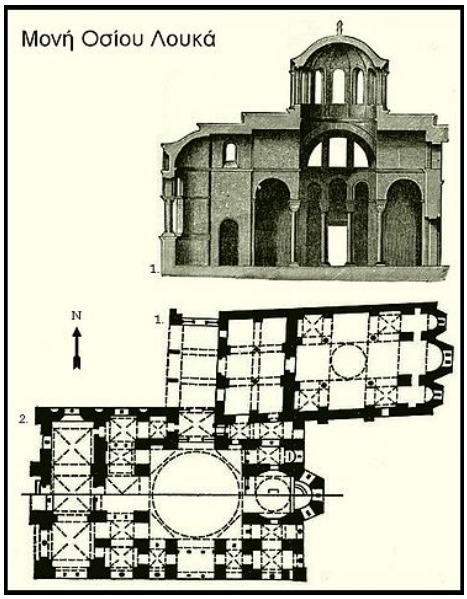
The image of the Virgin and Child is a common Christian image, and the mosaic depicts Byzantine innovations and the standard style of the period. The Virgin's lap is large. Christ sits nestled between her two legs. The figures' faces are depicted with gradual shading and modeling that provides a sense of realism that contradicts the schematic folding of their drapery.

Their drapery is defined by thick, harsh folds delineated by contrasting colors: the Virgin in blue and Christ in gold. The two frontal figures sit on an embellished gold throne that is tilted to imply perspective. This attempt is a new addition in Byzantine art during this period. The space given to the chair contradicts the frontality of the figures, but it provides a sense of realism previously unseen in Byzantine mosaics.

Hosios Loukas, Greece

The monastery of Hosios Loukas (St. Luke) in Greece was founded in the early tenth century to host the relics of St. Luke. Located on the slope of Mount Helicon, the monastery is known for its two churches, the Church of the Theotokos (tenth century) and the main building called the Katholikon (eleventh century).

The churches were decorated in mosaics, frescoes , and marble revetment. The two churches are connected together by the narthex of the Theotokos and an arm of the Katholikon. The churches demonstrate two different styles of architecture.



Plan of Hosios Loukas: Top (1 on diagram): Plan of the Church of the Theotokos. Bottom (2): Plan of Katholikon.

Church of the Theotokos and the Katholikon

The Church of the Theokotos represents a Greek cross-plan style church. It has a large central dome that rests on a series of pendentives. The Katholikon is also a Greek cross-plan style church but instead of the dome resting on pendentives, the dome of the Katholikon rests on squinches, which create an octagonal transition between the square plan of the church and the circular plan of the dome.

The difference in style between the pendentives and the squinches allow for different relationships between the architecture and the decoration and different play of light and darkness in the shapes the squinches provided.

The Katholikon's dome: Unlike the Church of the Theokotos, the dome of the Katholikon rests on squinches.

The mosaics found in the Katholikon were created in an early Byzantine style commonly seen in the centuries before Iconoclasm. The scenes depicted are flat with little architecture or props to provide a setting. Instead, the background is covered in brilliant gold mosaics.

The figures in the scenes, such as those seen in the apse mosaic of Christ washing the feet of his disciples, are depicted with naturalistic faces that are modeled with long, narrow noses and small mouths. The clothing of the figures is represented through schematic folds and contrasting colors. While the folds of the drapery represent a body underneath, there appears to be no actual mass to the body.

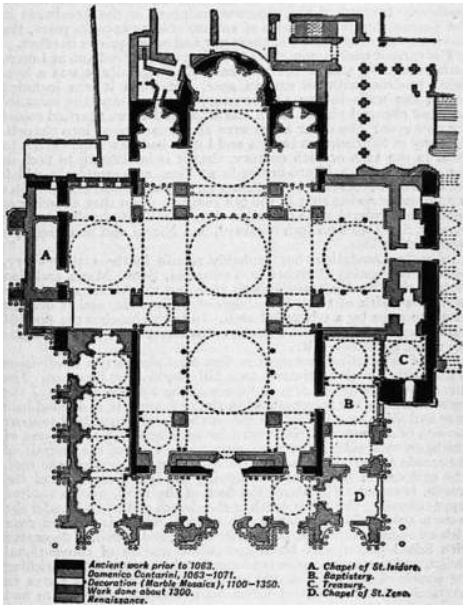
These characteristics of Byzantine mosaics began to change in the following century, partially through the addition of perspective in the Theokotos of the Hagia Sophia.

Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples: In the Katholikon, the figures in these scenes are depicted with naturalistic faces that are modeled with long, narrow noses and small mouths.

Saint Mark's Basilica, Venice

Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy, was first built in the ninth century and rebuilt in the eleventh century in its current form following a fire. The basilica is a grand building, built next to the Doge's Palace. It initially functioned as the doge's private chapel, then a state church, and in 1806 became the city's cathedral . The basilica houses the remains of Saint Mark, which the Venetians looted from Alexandria in 828 and prompted the building of the basilica.

Saint Mark's Basilica was built in the Byzantine Greek-cross plan. Each arm is divided into three naves and topped by a dome. At the crossing is a large central dome. The main apse is flanked by two smaller chapels. The narthex of the basilica is U-shaped and wraps around the western transept . It is decorated with scenes from the lives of Old Testament prophets.



Plan of St. Mark's Basilica: The circles mark the location of each dome.

The entirety of the basilica is richly decorated. The floor is covered in geometric patterns and designs that use the Roman decoration techniques known as opus sectile and opus tessellatum.

The lower walls and pillars are covered in marble polychromatic panels, and the upper walls and the domes are decorated with twelfth- and thirteenth-century mosaics. The central dome depicts an image of Christ Pantocrator , and the overall decorative program depicts scenes from the life of Christ and images of salvation from both the Old and New Testament.

The interior of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy: A view from the clerestory-level walkway shows its richly decorated mosaics and marble, polychrome panels.

Objects of Worship in the Middle Byzantine Empire

Personal objects (psalters and triptychs), reliquaries, and icons were popular objects of worship during the Middle Byzantine period.

Learning Objectives

Identify the principal objects of worships in Byzantine art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The triptych is a small, personal object made from three panels (either painted or carved from wood or ivory) that was used by an individual to guide their devotion and prayers to God. The Harbaville Triptych and the Borradaile Triptych are prime examples.
- Psalters were another form of personal devotion. These books contained the Books of Psalms and were often richly decorated, or illuminated, with scenes and miniatures .
- The reliquary was a protective container for a relic —a body part of a saint or a sacred object—that was preserved for veneration. While they could be simple, these containers were often decorated with or made from expensive materials such as gold, silver, and precious stones.
- The icon is an image of a saint that was also a considered sacred and was venerated by the public. These images, which vary in size and subject, were often painted panels.

Key Terms

- **reliquary**: A container to hold or display sacred objects.
- **triptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on three tablets connected by hinges.
- **Deesis**: A traditional iconic representation of Christ in Majesty enthroned, carrying a book, and flanked by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, and sometimes other saints and angels.
- **psalter**: The Book of Psalms, often applied to a book containing the Psalms separately printed.
- **cloisonne**: A decorative technique for metalwork, especially brass, whereby colored enamel is baked between the raised ridges of the metal.

- **icon**: An image, symbol, picture, or other representation that is usually as an object of religious devotion.

Triptych

Triptychs are a type of panel painting or relief carving for devotional objects that are created on three panels. The panels could also be divided in two, known as diptychs, or sometimes had more than three panels, known as a polyptych .

The use of triptychs began in the Byzantine period, and they were originally made to be small and portable. Later during the Gothic period, multi-panel devotional paintings were enlarged as altarpieces . However, the small, portable triptychs of the Byzantine period were used as personal objects of worship. They were designed to guide their owner in prayer and direct their thoughts towards Christ.

The triptych was designed with one central panel and two wings that folded over the main image and allowed the object to be portable, when closed, and to stand, when the wings were open. The wings are typically carved with portrayals of saints, while the main image often depicted Christ, although the imagery varied. The Harbaville Triptych depicts a scene of Deesis with Christ as the Pantocrator, while the Borradaile Triptych depicts an image of the Crucifixion.

Harbaville Triptych

The Harbaville Triptych is an early example from the mid-tenth century of the new ivory triptychs that replaced diptychs during the Middle Byzantine period. The main scene depicts the figures of Christ Pantocrator flanked by John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, in a supplication scene known as a Deesis.

John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary are depicted as intercessors, praying on behalf of the triptych's owner to Christ. On the register below them are the apostles James, John, Peter, Paul, and Andrew. The two side panels depict two registers with two characters each, all of which are identifiable saints.

Harbaville Triptych: The supplication scene, Deesis with Saints. Made of ivory, circa 950.

The figures are carved in a recognizably Byzantine style . Their bodies are elongated and narrow, and they seem to float or hover just above the ground instead of stand with weight. This illusion is furthered by the fact that nearly each character stands on a small platform.

The saints are elegantly draped, and their bodies are distinguished by the folds of their drapery and not any type of modeling. The figures' facial expressions are solemn, and their facial features are deeply carved. The saints each face outward, except for John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, who are each slightly turned and bowing to an enthroned Christ. Christ sits on an elaborate throne as the Pantocrator, with a book of Gospels in one arm and his hand gesturing in a motion of blessing.

Borradaile Triptych

The Borradaile Triptych's main image depicts the Crucifixion of Christ instead of a Deesis. The central image takes up the entirety of the main frame and the two wings are divided into three registers. The figures on the wings are images of saints, similar to the Harbaville Triptych.

The central scene is dominated by the image of Christ on the cross. Two angels flank him above his arms. Below are the figures of the Virgin Mary and St. John. St. John gestures and averts his eyes, while Mary lifts a veil to her face, which bears a distraught expression.

Borradaile Triptych: Central panel carved with the Crucifixion, the Virgin and St. John, and above, the half-length figures of the archangels Michael and Gabriel; on the left leaf, from top to bottom: St. Kyros; St. George and St. Theodore Stratilates; St. Menas and St. Prokopios; on the right leaf: St. John; St. Eustathius and St. Clement of Ankyra; St. Stephen and St Kyrion. On the reverse are two inscribed crosses and roundels containing busts of Saints Joachim and Anna in the centers, with Saints Basil and Barbara, and John the Persian and Thekla at the terminus. Made of ivory, circa 10th century.

The figures, like those of the Harbaville Triptych, are elongated, although less narrow and more rigid. They also are less deeply carved and appear more insubstantial. Except for Christ's upper body, which is unclothed, the bodies of the figures are defined by their rigid drapery. The saints stand in straight, upright positions that further provide a sense of solemnity to the scene.

Christ is seen on the cross in a stance that focuses on his divine qualities and not his human suffering. The only emotion from the scene derives from his mother, the Virgin Mary, who stands weeping beneath him.

Reliquaries

A reliquary is a protective container used for the storage and display of sacred objects called relics. Relics were a part of the body of a dead saint that was preserved for veneration. Some relics are believed to be endowed with miraculous powers, and other relics have come to play key roles in certain church festivals.

The veneration of relics and use of reliquaries became popular during the Byzantine period when the bodies of saints were often moved and divided between Churches. While many relics were honored and venerated, the church never considered this form of devotion as a form of worship—that was an act reserved for God.

Reliquary of the True Cross: This reliquary depicts a scene of the Crucifixion with fourteen saints around the border. The reliquary is very small and probably contained a piece of the True Cross, the cross on which Christ was crucified.

Reliquaries take many forms and shapes and are made out of a variety of materials. However, many reliquaries were made from or decorated with expensive material, such as gold and precious stones.

A reliquary from the early ninth century depicts a scene of the Crucifixion with fourteen saints around the border. The reliquary is very small and probably contained a piece of the True Cross, the cross on which Christ was crucified. This reliquary is made from cloisonné, a metalworking technique in which metal was soldered into compartments and was then filled with enamel, glass, gems, or other materials. This reliquary is made with green, white, blue, and red enamel and gold and is only four inches high by nearly three inches wide.

Psalters

Like triptychs, psalters were small, private objects used for private devotion and worship. A psalter is a book that contains the Book of Psalms and other liturgical material such as calendars. They were often commissioned and were richly decorated and illuminated. The surviving psalters contain many fine examples of the painting styles and techniques from the Middle Byzantine period.

The Paris Psalter is a mid-tenth century manuscript with fourteen, full-page, miniature paintings created in a classical style. As with most of the art produced under the Macedonian Dynasty , the figures and subject matter were influenced by a revived interest in classical culture .

The figures painted in these scenes have bodies with mass and drapery that conforms, not shapes, their bodies. The image depicts David, a psalmist, in an idyllic country setting outside a city (seen in the distance) composing psalms on his harp. He sits with a sheep, goats, dogs, and an angel, representing Melody, while a personification of Echo peers around a column .

A male figure, representing the mountain of Bethlehem, lounges on the ground. The image is reminiscent of a Greco-Roman wall painting of the musician Orpheus charming people and animals with his music. While the figures appear modeled and are reminiscent of classical art, the psalter has a Byzantine style to it.

The clothing is still rendered with bright, contrasting colors and the folds of the drapery are stylized and dark. The slightly skewed perspective given to the vase on top the column and the city in the background are additional elements that provide the scene with a Byzantine artistic style.

Paris Psalter: David composing on his harp.

Icons

Icons remained popular devotional objects during the Byzantine period. These objects, which varied in size, depicted the image of a saint, or a sacred person such as Christ or Mary, who was considered sacred and was venerated. The images were often painted panels and the display of icons surged following the end of Iconoclasm in the ninth century.

Many icons, once reaching this status, would be furthered objectified and protected through the addition of custom gilded frames, or gold or silver cases that covered the entirety of the image except for the face of the subject. Other icons, such as a ninth-century depiction of the Crucifixion, contained imagery on both sides.

Double-sided icon with the Crucifixion and the Virgin Hodegitria: The original painting was done in the ninth century, and additional details were added in the thirteenth century.

Painting in the Middle Byzantine Empire

Paintings were popular materials for representing stories and to guide devotion during the Middle Byzantine period.

Learning Objectives

Relate the progression and stylistic changes of painting during the Middle Byzantine period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Emotional elements begin to be seen in Middle Byzantine painting, as one can see in the Lamentation wall painting from the Church of St. Pantaleimon. The figures of the scene are rendered with humanity and sorrow as they grieve over the dead body of Christ.
- Naturalism and schematics combine in the Death of St. Onesimus. The folds of the figures' clothing follow the contours of their bodies. However, the folds are defined by thick lines , and the title figure seems to hover over the landscape.
- The Theotokos of Vladimir is a late 11th to early 12th century icon of the Virgin and Child. The icon is considered a protective icon of Russia and depicts a compassionate and emotionally charged Virgin and Child.

Key Terms

- **Lamentation of Christ**: The scene depicts the body of Christ being mourned after the removal of his body from the cross by his family, friends, and followers.

Painting in the Middle Byzantine

Painting during the Middle Byzantine period began to progress and change stylistically. Artists approached common scenes with an ingenuity based on a mix of naturalism in the conveyance of emotional reaction, and schematics in specific renderings of the body. This can be seen in the fresco of the Lamentation found in the Church of Saint Pantaleimon in the city of Nerezi, Macedonia, an illumination of the Death of St. Onesimus, and an icon of the Virgin and Child.

Lamentation from Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia

The Lamentation of Christ is an iconic scene that depicts the Virgin Mary holding and mourning her dead son, just after Christ has been removed from the cross. She wraps an arm around his shoulders and presses her face against his. St. John grasps Christ's right hand while Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus kneel at Christ's feet. A fifth follower enters the scene with arms outstretched from the right and a group of angels fly above the scene in the deep blue sky.

The Macedonian painters created a scene filled with emotional tension that was unprecedented in Byzantine art. The figures faces are neither solemn nor formal but instead are emotionally charged with grief and sorrow. Mary's face especially denotes the emotion and pain that a mother feels when grieving a lost child.

The figures are also bent over Christ's body, which further emphasizes the emotions in the scene—no longer stiff or static , these figures feel and cause the viewer to be filled with emotion.

Lamentation of Christ: This is a detail from the wall painting in the Church of Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia.

Despite these elements of naturalism, there are some elements of Byzantine style in the fresco. For one, the figures' clothing is still schematically rendered, even though most of the figures appear to have bodies and mass under their garments. For another, the

seminude body of Christ is rendered in a style similar to the drapery. The muscles are defined through schematic lines that denote parts of his body, such as his knees and abdominal muscles.

Another oddity is that Christ's body is not on the ground but instead hovers unnaturally off the ground. This is hardly noticed at first, since the placement of his torso and feet make sense in their individual context, but as a whole it requires Christ's body to float instead of lay naturally on the ground.

The Death of St. Onesimus

A similar mixture of naturalism and stylization is evident in a painting that depicts the martyrdom of Saint Onesimus (c. 985 CE). The image is part of the Menologion of Basil II, an illuminated manuscript compiled circa 1000 CE as a church calendar.

The Epistle to Philemon, written by Paul the Apostle to the slave-master Philemon, concerns a runaway slave called Onesimus. This slave found his way to the site of Paul's imprisonment to escape punishment for a theft of which he was accused. After hearing the Gospel from Paul, Onesimus converted to Christianity.

Paul, having earlier converted Philemon to Christianity, sought to reconcile the two by writing the letter to Philemon which today exists in the New Testament. During the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian and the persecution of Trajan, Onesimus was imprisoned in Rome and might have been martyred by stoning, although some sources claim that he was beheaded.

The Death of St. Onesimus: From the Monologion of Basil II, a painting produced around 985 CE; the book was assembled around 1000.

As in the Lamentation scene above, the Death of St. Onesimus combines the naturalistic and the schematic. The two men who beat Onesimus to death convey a sense of dynamism as they bend at the waists and knees. The folds of their clothing and of Onesimus's loincloth follows the contours of their bodies as they assume their poses.

Although the painting is damaged, Onesimus's furrowed brow, possibly suggesting anger or frustration, is still visible. Despite these realistic elements, the folds of the figures' clothing appears more linear than natural, defined by deep, noticeable lines. Like the figure of Christ in the Lamentation, Onesimus seems to hover over the landscape and rest the top half of his body on the leg of one of his attackers. Furthermore, the blood pours from his legs in a linear manner, appearing more like strings than liquid.

Theotokos of Vladimir

The Theotokos of Vladimir, an icon of the Virgin and Child, represents the new style of icons that were created in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These icons depict emotion, compassion, and the growing trend in spirituality.

The mother and child are depicted with serene faces in the Byzantine style. Mary's nose is long and narrow and her mouth small. She looks out and confronts the viewer with compassionate, knowing eyes that remind the viewer of Christ's future sacrifice . The Christ child is small, although his face is adult-like and he is drawn to his mother and embraces her. His drapery shines as if it was golden rays, and the Virgin is dressed in rich, dark fabric with gold embellishments.

The compassion and humanity between the characters prefigures the emotional Late Byzantine style of the next two centuries. The image was given as a gift to the Grand Duke of Kiev in 1131 by the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople and is an important and protective icon of the Russian cities of Vladimir and Moscow and the country of Russia itself.

Theotokos of Vladimir: This new style of icons depict emotion, compassion, and the growing trend in spirituality.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 367px-1911_Britannica-Architecture-St_Marku2019s.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23106698. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 373px-Osios_lukas.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6429572. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Veneza118. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Veneza118.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hagia Sophia Interior Virgin 2007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hagia_Sophia_Interior_Virgin_2007.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hosios Loukas Katholikon 20091116-44. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hosios_Loukas_Katholikon_20091116-44.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Osios Loukas 1. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Osios_Loukas_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconoclasm#Byzantine_era. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Iconoclasm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Macedonian Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Macedonian Art (Byzantine). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_art_(Byzantine). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Feast of Orthodoxy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_of_Orthodoxy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hosios Loukas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hosios_Loukas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mosaic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic%23Byzantine_mosaics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- St Mark's Basilica. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mark's_Basilica. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hagia Sophia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagia_Sophia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pantocrator. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Pantocrator. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Katholikon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Katholikon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pendentive. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pendentive. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Squinch. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/squinch. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paris psaulter gr139 fol1v. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paris_psaulter_gr139_fol1v.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 335px-1988_-_Byzantine_Museum,_Athens_-_Crucifixion_-_9th-13th_century_-_Photo_by_Giovanni_Dall'Orto,_Nov_12_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16605336. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 576px-Borradaile_triptych_BM_1923_1205_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borradaile_triptych_BM_1923_1205_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reliquary True Cross c800 Byzantine. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reliquary_True_Cross_c800_Byzantine.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aville-louvre-oa3247-recto.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Triptych_Harbaville_Louvre_OA3247_recto.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Macedonian Art (Byzantine). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_art_(Byzantine). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Deesis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Deesis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Borradaile Triptych. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Borradaile_Triptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Harbaville Triptych. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Harbaville_Triptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ivory Carving. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_carving#Antiquity_and_the_Early_Medieval_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Psalter. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/psalter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reliquary. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Reliquary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Theotokos of Vladimir. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Theotokos_of_Vladimir. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Icons. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Icons. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Triptych. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Triptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cloisonnu00e9. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cloisonne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vladimirskaya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimirskaya.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Meister von Nerezi 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Meister_von_Nerezi_001.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Onesimus_of_Byzantium_(Menologion_of_Basil_II).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20575782. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Onesimus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Onesimus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Menologion of Basil II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Menologion_of_Basil_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Theotokos of Vladimir. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Theotokos_of_Vladimir. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lamentation of Christ. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamentation_of_Christ. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Church of St.nPanteleimon (Nerezi). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_St._Panteleimon_(Nerezi). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 9.2: Middle Byzantine Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

9.3: Late Byzantine Art

Late Byzantine Art

Late Byzantine Art began after the sack of Constantinople in 1204 and continued until the fall of Byzantium in 1453.

Learning Objectives

Explain how art during the Late Byzantine period departed from the standards and styles seen in its early and middle periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The French and Italian armies sacked Constantinople during the Fourth Crusades in 1204 and divided the Byzantium empire into smaller kingdoms. The Byzantines eventually re-conquered Constantinople in 1261 and the Byzantine Empire continued to reign until falling to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.
- Art during the final centuries of the Byzantine Empire is known as Late Byzantine art and the styles and conventions of the Early and Middle Byzantine periods begin to change to reflect emerging dynamics and tastes.
- Mosaics and frescoes were still used for church decoration, although frescoed wall paintings became more popular. The change in favored medium also changed the types of imagery; wall paintings more heavily favor narrative scenes and cycles instead of standard single images.
- During this period landscapes and settings began to emerge in two-dimensional art. Furthermore, a new method of depicting the body, with softer modeling and shading was used. Robes and drapery are still schematically rendered, but the figures now have mass and tangible bodies.

Key Terms

- **Ottoman**: Of the Islamic empire of Turkey.

Late Byzantine Art

The period of Late Byzantium saw the decline of the Byzantine Empire during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. Although the capital city of Constantinople and the empire as a whole prospered as a connection between east and west traders, Byzantium continually dealt with threats from the Ottoman Turks to the east and the Latin Empire to the west.

During the Fourth Crusades, the Crusaders attacked Constantinople, took the city under siege in 1203, and eventually overcame its defenses to sack the city in 1204. Constantinople became the capital city of the Latin Empire, one of the new kingdoms of a divided Byzantium, until the Byzantines retook it in 1261.

Once more, Constantinople became a prosperous Byzantine city until falling to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The sack of Constantinople in 1204 marks the starting point of Late Byzantine Art, which lasted until the fifteenth century and spread beyond the borders of Byzantium.

The division of the Byzantine Empire: The division of the Byzantine Empire after its sacking in 1204 by the French and Italian armies during the Fourth Crusades.

Art during this period began to change from the standards and styles seen in the Early and Middle periods of Byzantium rule. A renewed interest in landscapes and earthly settings arose in mosaics, frescoes, and psalters . This development eventually led to the demise of the gold background.

The settings are often simple, perhaps a hill or a chair at first, and are often pastoral. Architecture began to be depicted more often, which renewed the use of perspective . At first buildings were rendered slightly skewed, but eventually artists refined the combination of material (mosaic and painting) with architecture and perspective .

Christ Healing a Paralytic : A mosaic in Caphernaum from the cycle of the Life of Christ. It is located in the outer narthex of Chora Church, Constantinople, circa 1310–20.

Chora Church

Mosaic work was still popular in the Late Byzantine period, but frescoes and the depiction of narrative cycles began to increase in popularity to become the primary decoration in churches. This transition is seen in the Chora Church, which was initially decorated in mosaic, with the final wing decorated with wall paintings. The shift in media changed the subjects depicted.

Mosaics of single scenes and figures were replaced in favor of frescoed narrative cycles and biblical stories. The rendering of the figures also began to change. Artists now relied less on sharp, schematic folds and patterns and instead use softer, more subtle modeling and shading. While sharp folds in the drapery can still be found in images from this period, these folds are rendered in similar, not complimentary, colors and shades. Furthermore the bodies appear to have mass and weight. The figures no longer float or hover on their toes but stand on their feet. This allows for the addition of movement and energy in the painted figures and an overall increase of drama and emotion.

Frescoed interior of the Paracclesion Fresco : Scenes from the lives of the Virgin Mary and Christ. Chora Church, Constantinople, c. 1310–20.

Pammakaristos Church

Although sculpture and column design are largely absent from discussions of Late Byzantine art, some notable fourteenth-century examples can be found in the Pammakaristos Church in Constantinople. Although the church was converted to a mosque in the fifteenth century, and all representations of humans and animals were either destroyed or covered, at least two fragments of a column capital depicting the busts of apostles in high relief survives in the collection.

While the heads of the men are somewhat large in proportion to their bodies, their bodies have assumed more naturalistic positions than their predecessors. They direct their gazes to either subtle or sharp angles. The two hands that are visible hold books, possibly the Gospels, to their chests. In sum, their poses anticipate the return to classicism that would define the Renaissance in the West.

Column capital decorated with busts of apostles: Their poses anticipate the return to classicism that would define the Renaissance in the West.

The Chora Church in Constantinople

The Chora Church is decorated with iconic murals and mosaics from the fourteenth century that represent the Late Byzantine artistic styles.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ways in which the Chora Church in Constantinople represents Late Byzantine artistic styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Chora Church's architecture, mosaics , and frescoes are exceptional examples of Late Byzantine artistic developments and style . The church that stands today consists of two narthices, a parecclesion , and a mortuary chapel.
- The mosaics demonstrate the new weightiness and smoothness that is seen in Late Byzantine art. As is seen of the Koimesis Mosaic, the bodies are more modeled, delicately shaded, and have mass —the figures appear to stand on the ground instead of float.
- Frescoed wall painting is the primary means of decoration in the paracclesion. The program of images relate to Christ and the Virgin Mary by depicting scenes from their lives, their ancestors, and themes of salvation, which culminate in scenes from the Last Judgment.
- The apse fresco of the Anastasis depicts Christ redeeming Old Testament souls from Hell. The scene is full of energy and is centered on Christ who grabs the wrists of Adam and Eve. The figures are depicted with grace and a smooth modeling of mass and drapery.

- Throughout the mosaics and frescoes, Christ is depicted as a bearded (mature and wise) savior and ruler. This evolution from clean-shaven youth to bearded adult coincides with Christianity's evolution from illegal religion to state religion.

Key Terms

- **dado**: The lower portion of an interior wall that is decorated differently from the upper portion.
- **koimesis**: Also known as the Dormition of the Virgin, this is a depiction of the Virgin Mary in her last sleep, at death, before ascending into Heaven.
- **mandorla**: An almond-shaped cloud or radiance that surrounds sacred figures, such as Christ or the Virgin Mary, in traditional Christian art.
- **parecclesion**: A side chapel found in Byzantine architecture.
- **narthex**: A western vestibule leading to the nave in some (especially Orthodox) Christian churches.

The Chora Church

The Chora Church's full name is the Church of the Holy Savior in Chora. The church was first built in Constantinople during the early fifth century. Its name references its location outside the city's fourth-century walls. Even when the walls were expanded in the early fifth century by Theodosius II, the church maintained its name.

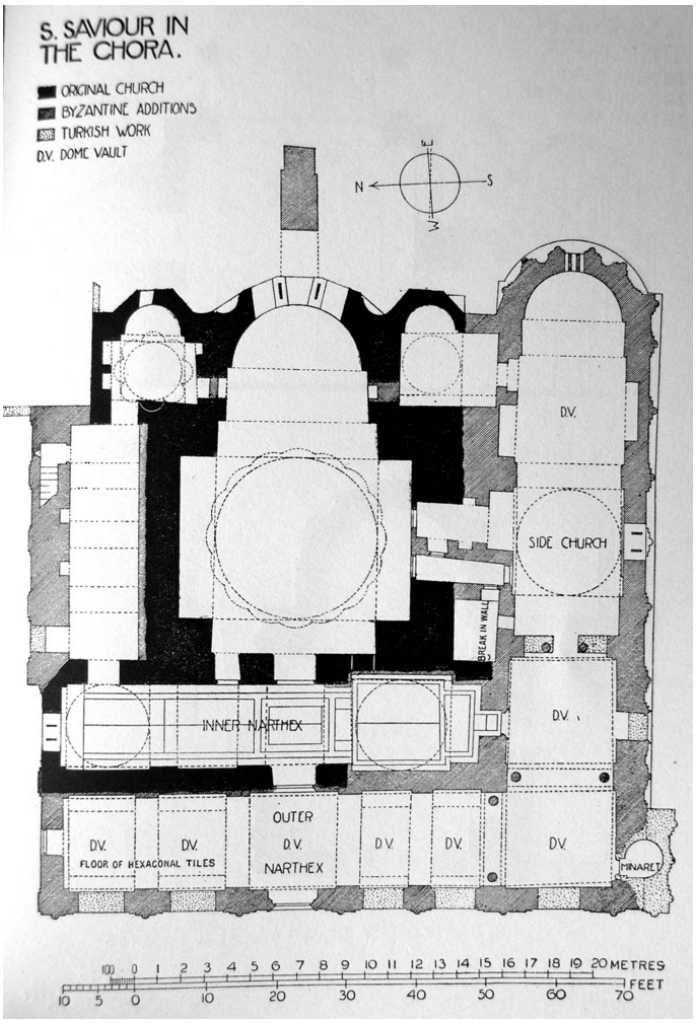
Inside the church is a set of frescoes and mosaics that survived the church's conversion into a mosque in the sixteenth century when its Christian imagery was plastered over. In 1948 the church became a museum after undergoing extensive restoration to uncover and restore its fourteenth-century decoration. It is now known as the Kariye Museum or Kariye Camii.

Architecture

The Chora Church that stands today is the result of its third stage of construction. This building and the interior decoration were completed between 1315 and 1321 under the Byzantine statesman Theodore Metochites. Metochites' additions and reconstruction in the fourteenth century enlarged the ground plan from the original small, symmetrical church into a large, asymmetrical square that consists of three main areas:

1. An inner and outer narthex or entrance hall.
2. The naos or main chapel.
3. The side chapel, known as the parecclesion. The parecclesion serves as a mortuary chapel and held eight tombs that were added after the area was initially decorated.

There are six domes in the church, three over the naos (one over the main space and two over smaller chapels), two in the inner narthex, and one in the side chapel. The domes are pumpkin-shaped, with concave bands radiating from their centers, and richly decorated with frescoes and mosaics that depict images of Christ and the Virgin at the center, with angels or ancestors surrounding them in the bands.



Ground plan of the Chora Church: Additions and reconstruction in the fourteenth century enlarged the ground plan from the original small, symmetrical church into a large, asymmetrical square that consists of three main areas.

Mosaics

Mosaics extensively decorate the narthices of the Chora Church. The artists first decorated the church in the naos and then completed the work in the inner and outer narthices, which results in differences in the mosaics' execution as the style progressed to show more liveliness and subtlety.

The surviving mosaics in the naos depict the Virgin and Child and the Dormition of the Virgin, a koimesis scene depicting the Virgin after death before she ascends to Heaven. This scene, located above the west door, depicts the Virgin in blue lying on a sarcophagus draped in purple and gold. Christ, in gold, stands behind the Virgin surrounded by a mandorla and holds an infant, representing the Virgin's soul. The figures in the scene all have a certain weightiness that helps to ground them, adding an element of naturalism .

Koimesis mosaic: The figures in the scene all have a certain weightiness that helps to ground them, adding an element of naturalism.

The mosaics found in the narthices of the Chora Church also depict scenes of the lives of the Virgin and Christ, while other scenes depict Old Testament stories that prefigure the Salvation. In the outer narthex, above the doorway to the inner narthex is a mosaic depicting Christ as the Pantocrator , the ruler or judge of all, in the center of a dome. The mosaic depicts a stern-faced Christ against a gold backdrop holding the gospels in one hand while gesturing with the other. An inscription in the mosaic reads, “Jesus Christ, Land of the Living.”

South dome of the inner narthex: This mosaic depicts Christ Pantocrator surrounded by his ancestors.

In another important scene above the entrance to the naos, Christ Enthroned is depicted receiving the donor of the church. The scene follows the Byzantine convention of depicting an architectural donation with an image of Christ in the center and the donor kneeling beside him, holding a model of his donation.

Here, Christ sits on a throne in a position similar to the Pantocrater, holding a book of gospels while his other hand gestures. The donor Theodore Metochites, wearing the clothing of his office, kneels on Christ’s right. He offers Christ a representation of the Chora Church in his hands. An inscription gives his titles.

Dedication mosaic: The scene follows the Byzantine convention of depicting an architectural donation with an image of Christ in the center and the donor kneeling beside him, holding a model of his donation.

Frescoes

The walls and ceilings of the parecclesion are decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin, and themes of salvation befitting for a mortuary chapel. Like the mosaics, the scenes are painted in the upper levels of the building. The lower levels are reserved for painted images of saints and prophets and a decorative dado that mimics marble revetment .

The entirety of the parecclesion is covered in fresco scenes and painted images, creating an overwhelming sense of splendor and glory that ultimately brings the viewer to the final scenes of salvation and judgment.

Virgin and Child with Angels: A fresco in a dome in the parecclesion that depicts the Virgin and Child with Angels.

Anastasis

The most important of these frescoes is the Anastasis, a representation of the Last Judgment, in the apse of the eastern bay . This image depicts Christ in Hell, saving the souls of the Old Testament. Christ stands in the center grasping the wrists of Adam and Eve, whom he raises from their sarcophagi. Saints, prophets, martyrs and other righteous souls, including John the Baptist, King David, and King Solomon, from the Old Testament stand on either side of Christ. Christ, standing over a bound Satan, wears a white robe and is framed by a white and light blue mandorla.

Anastasis: This image depicts Christ in Hell, saving the souls of the Old Testament. Christ stands in the center grasping the wrists of Adam and Eve, whom he raises from their sarcophagi.

The image is the culmination of the parecclesion's fresco cycle and one of the most impressive Late Byzantine paintings. Christ stands in an active, chiastic position. His arms reach out to Adam and Eve and his feet are positioned on uneven ground, providing the sensation of imbalance as he retrieves righteous souls.

The figures themselves are rendered in a softer, subtler mode. The harsh, jagged drapery has softened slightly with fluid and delineated folds. The expression of Christ and the others are dignified and stern. The Old Testament figures on either side gesture towards the scene, signaling the future of the faithful, as they wait for Christ to bring them into Heaven.

Changing Representations of Christ

The depictions of Christ in the Chora Church differ greatly from those of the third and fourth centuries. Recalling Early Christian art, Christ often appears clean shaven and youthful, sometimes cast as the Good Shepherd who tends and rescues his flock from danger. At a time when Christianity was illegal, Christians would have found such imagery of a protector reassuring.

By the fourteenth century, when Theodore Metochites funded the interior decoration, Christianity was no longer a fledgling faith; it was a state religion in which even the emperor recognized Christ as the ultimate authority. The images of Christ in the frescoes and mosaics of the Chora Church depict an authoritative, bearded man who occupies the role of both savior and judge. As an archetypal symbol of authority and wisdom through the ages, the beard would have been a logical choice for the face of the most supreme leader.

Icon Painting in Byzantine Russia

Andrei Rublev is considered the foremost fifteenth century Russian icon painter and the master behind the Old Testament Trinity.

Learning Objectives

Explain the evolution of Russian icon painting from the tenth century to the modern era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The tradition of Russian icon production began when the Kievian Rus' converted to Orthodox Christianity in the tenth century. As time passed, the technique took on uniquely Russian attributes.
- Russian icon artists saw themselves as servants of God who transcribed the Gospels in visual form . Since they did not seek individual glory they did not sign their work, so the names of most Russian icon artists are unknown to Western scholars.
- The painted icons of Andrei Rublev, who worked in the fifteenth century, are considered to be the pinnacle of Russian icon painting, demonstrating the combination of Byzantine and Russian styles .
- The Old Testament Trinity that depicts the three angels hosted by Abraham and Sarah as described in Genesis 18, is an icon that is ascribed solely to Rublev's hand. The icon is painted with brilliant colors and a delicate hand to depict subtle lines , modeling, and humanity in the scene.
- Exposure to Western styles and the dawn of the modern age changed the appearance of icons and the media in which they were produced: subject matter assumed a more realistic appearance by the seventeenth century and, by the early twentieth century, the mechanized printing press sparked the popularity of paper icons.

Key Terms

- **tempera**: A painting medium with either a casein or egg-yolk binder.
- **prefiguration**: A vague advance representation or suggestion of something.

Russian Icons

In 988 CE, the Slavic confederation known as Kievan Rus' (a precursor to present-day Russia) adopted Orthodox Christianity as its official religion. Shortly thereafter, those living within its borders began producing icons. As a general rule, these icons strictly followed the traditional models and formulas of Byzantine art.

Nevertheless, as time passed, Russian artists widened the vocabulary of types and styles far beyond anything found elsewhere in the Orthodox world. Like Byzantine icons, Russian icons were usually small-scale paintings on wood. However, some icons produced for churches and monasteries were, at times, much larger. Russian artists also used alternative media, such as copper, for their work.

Feodorovskaya icon: Russian artists also used alternative media, such as copper, for their work.

Russians sometimes speak of an icon as having been written because, in the Russian language, the same word means both to paint and to write. Icons are considered to be visual versions of the Gospels, and therefore, careful attention is paid to ensure that each

Gospel is faithfully and accurately conveyed.

Because of these strict standards, artists saw themselves as God's servants and did not strive for individual glory, as would become the norm in the West. For this reason, they did not sign their creations, and very few artists' names are known to scholars outside of Russia. Andrei Rublev is one rare example.

Andrei Rublev

Russian icon painters flourished throughout the Byzantine period. Russian icons were known for their strict adhesion to Byzantine-style painting including the use of patterns, strong lines, and contrasting colors. Most Byzantine Russian icons were painted in egg tempera on wood panels. Gold leaf was often used for halos and background colors and bronze , silver, and tin were also used to embellish the icons.

The work of Andrei Rublev, a Russian icon painter in the fifteenth century, is considered to be the pinnacle of Byzantine Russian icon painting. Not much is known about his life. He was born in the 1360s and died in either 1427 or 1430.

What is known about Rublev comes from monastic chronicles, which account for his work as a painter and do not discuss his life. He is believed to have lived at the Trinity-St. Serguis Lavra, a monastery outside of Moscow in the town of Sergiyev Posad. Rublev is first recorded to have painted icons and frescos for the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Moscow in 1405.

He worked at the Cathedral of the Annunciation under Theopanes the Greek, a Byzantine master, who moved to Russia and is believed to have been Rublev's teacher. Rublev also often worked with Daniil Cherni, another monastic artist. The two painted icons for the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir in 1408 and the Church of the Trinity in the Trinity-St.Sergius Lavra monastery from 1425-1427.

The Old Testament Trinity

The icon known as the Old Testament Trinity (1411–1427) is the only work to be attributed solely to Rublev's hand. It is considered to represent the brilliance of his work and the greatest achievement of Byzantine Russian icons. The egg tempera icon was made for the Church of the Trinity in the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra and stands just less than five feet tall and is nearly four feet wide.

Old Testament Trinity: This is the only work to be attributed solely to Rublev's hand. It is considered to represent the brilliance of his work and the greatest achievement of Byzantine Russian icons.

The icon depicts three angels around a table and is an illustration of Genesis 18, the Hospitality of Abraham, in which Abraham and his wife Sarah host three angels at their table. The scene focuses on the three angels and is full of symbolism that focuses on the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the prefiguration of salvation.

The image today is poorly preserved, but it demonstrates Rublev's style and skill. The three angels sit around a table with a single chalice. The figures are delicately rendered. Their faces and hands are shaded to create volume , and their expressions are calm and serene. Each angel has a halo and wings, and holds a thin scepter.

Despite having nearly identical faces, their vividly painted garments help to distinguish them. Their garments are painted in rich, saturated colors. Each angel wears a robe in brilliant blue coupled with a second color including a orange, a deep red, and a green. The linearity of the robes highlights Byzantine methods of modeling that are based on the use of solid lines and complimentary colors to create contrasting folds and replicate the body's mass and height.

While the figures appear weighty and naturalistic, the scenery and landscape around them are non-naturalistic. The table and chairs are painted in a skewed perspective and a small architectural detail in the upper left of the panel and a central tree create the basis of the setting.

Into the Modern Era

Until the seventeenth century, innovation was largely absent from icon production in Russia. When Roman Catholic and Protestant styles from Western Europe triggered new developments, the result was a split in the Russian Orthodox Church. The traditionalists —the persecuted Old Ritualists or Old Believers—continued the traditional stylization of icons, while the State Church modified its practice.

While some artists continued to produce figures in the traditional stylized manner, others opted for a mixture of Russian stylization and Western European realism very much like that of Catholic religious art of the time. The Westernization of Russian icons likely

escalated under the reign of Tsar Peter the Great, whose cultural revolution brought Western values and the Enlightenment to Russia.

Tradition and the new style converge in an icon of Saint Nicolas and the Venerable Gerasimus of Boldino holding the much venerated Theotokos of Kazan. The Theotokos of Kazan was an icon of the highest stature within the Russian Orthodox Church. According to legend, it was acquired from Constantinople, lost in 1438, and miraculously recovered in pristine state in 1579. The icon was stolen and likely destroyed in 1904.

In the icon of Nicolas and Geasimus, the two saints, the icon, and the background are realistically rendered. The divine light source in the center causes naturalistic shadows to fall on the the hands of the two saints and the sides of their faces. Color and visual texture also mimic the natural world, while the tiles floor betrays a sense of realistic one-point perspective. Earth tones dominate the picture plane , pointing to possible Dutch Baroque (Protestant) influence.

Icon of Saint Nicolas and Gerasimus of Boldino holding the Theotokos of Kazan: Unlike traditional icons, this example from the seventeenth century or later displays the influence of Western Protestant art, such as the paintings of the Dutch Baroque tradition.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, icon painting in Russia went into a great decline with the arrival of machine lithography on paper and tin. This new technology could produce icons in great quantity and much more cheaply than the workshops of painters. Today, Russian Orthodox worshippers purchase much larger numbers of paper icons than the more expensive painted panels.

Painting in the Late Byzantine Empire

As Late Byzantine painting became more naturalistic—bodies gained mass and figures portrayed humanity with emotion and movement—and these developments and traditions continued into the Post-Byzantine age.

Learning Objectives

Describe the form and content of icons and murals found in Late Byzantine painting and its immediate successors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Painters in the Late Byzantine period painted scenes with a new sense of naturalism by portraying figures with mass and naturalistic bodies under their clothing; drapery became a garment through which the body was rendered. Landscapes and settings were used more often, and figures were given increased movement and emotion to lend them an additional level of humanity.
- The Ohrid Icons are a series of icons produced in Constantinople that were later moved to Ohrid Macedonia. The Annunciation from one of the icons is a delicately painted scene filled with emotion and tension.

- The Crucifixion scene painted behind the altar of the Katholikon of the Monastery of the Virgin at Studenica is Serbia is another scene that depicts figures in the Byzantine style —they are infused with emotion and humanity, represented through their figure's expressions and the sway of Christ's body.
- During this time the iconostasis was fully developed and became a popular method of dividing the nave from the altar in Byzantine churches, especially in Russia. This screen was often large and covered in icons of saints and Christ in the general pattern of a Deesis .
- Even as the Byzantine Empire lost territory, its artistic traditions continued, most notably in the Cretan School. In this final phase of Byzantine art, figures and illusionistic space continued to assume greater degrees of naturalism, while the gold background remained in most icons.

Key Terms

- **Katholikon**: The major temple or church building of a monastery or diocese in an Eastern Orthodox Church.
- **iconostasis**: A wall of icons between the sanctuary and the nave in an Eastern Orthodox church.
- **Deesis**: An iconic representation, common in the Byzantine period, of Christ enthroned, Christ Pantocrator, surrounded by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, often in supplication.

Late Byzantine Painting

The paintings in the Church of Christ in Chora are representative of the style of painting produced in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire. Large murals were painted over expanses of architecture.

Many icons at this time were panels painted on both sides. Icons were painted this way since they were used in processions, and therefore seen from two directions. In churches, they were often displayed in special stands to allow for the viewing of both sides. Even after the Byzantine shrank and eventually fell, its artistic traditions continued in many former territories. The most famous example is the Cretan School.

Iconostasis

During the Late Byzantine period the iconostasis was fully developed. It was a screen or wall that stood in the nave, separating the space from the sanctuary and altar of the church. This wall was covered in icons and usually had three doors that allowed access into the sanctuary and viewing of the altar.

Icons were placed on the iconostasis following a general guideline that included the presence of a Deesis, Christ enthroned surrounded by John the Baptist and the Theotokos. Other icons included images of angels, saints, Old Testament prophets, the Apostles, and the patron saints of the church and city. The presence of the icons and the iconostasis was not to separate but to provide a bridge or a connection between the earthly and heavenly realms.

Iconostasis of the Church of the Annunciation: Designed by Theophanes the Greek, the wall is covered in icons and its doors allow access into the sanctuary and a view of the altar.

Ohrid Icons

The Ohrid Icons (early fourteenth century) were produced in Constantinople and were later moved to Ohrid in Macedonia. One icon depicts the Virgin Mary on one side and the Annunciation on the other side. The Annunciation portrays the Virgin Mary seated on a throne as the angel Gabriel approaches her to deliver the news of her conception of the son of God.

The background is typically Byzantine: gold leaf background that mimics the golden backgrounds of mosaics . The architecture is rendered in a later Byzantine style. The buildings are painted with an attempt at perspective that is more skewed than correct but that still provides a suggestion of space.

This was also seen in the Theotokos of the Hagia Sophia, but in this case the architecture provides more of a place setting, as in the landscape of the Lamentation from Nerezi. The figures themselves are rendered with Byzantine faces—small mouths and long, narrow noses. The faces, hands, and feet are carefully shaded and modeled.

The clothing is also follows the Byzantine style with dramatic, deep folds and a schematic patterning that renders the body underneath. The bodies, however, differ from their earlier Byzantine predecessors. They have weight and appear to exist underneath their clothing.

Annunciation: This icon portrays the Virgin Mary seated on a throne as the angel Gabriel approaches her to deliver the news of her conception of the son of God.

The scene also takes cues from Late Byzantine styles, since it is dramatically depicted. The Virgin's rigid pose and single gesture signify her unease at the angel's approach. Gabriel, meanwhile, appears to have just landed. He strides forward, with an arm outstretched. He places his weight completely on his left foot, while he prepares to plant his right foot on the ground .

We are witness to the moment of his arrival. The momentum of his arrival is further emphasized by the placement of his wings. One wing has settled down onto his back while the other reaches upwards to balance his flight. The movement and emotion in the

scene can be related to the Anastasias scene of the Chora Church. Both images have a single, central figure full of motion that provides energy to the different scenes depicted.

Monastery of the Virgin at Studenica, Serbia

The Serbian Monastery of the Virgin was built in the twelfth century outside the city of Kraljevo. While the monastery's churches do not appear from the outside to follow Byzantine architectural styles, the interior painting of the Katholikon, the Church of the Virgin, is painted in the Late Byzantine manner.

The Crucifixion, painted on the western wall overlooking the altar, represents the mastery of Serbian art and the development and spread of the Late Byzantine style from the center of Byzantium in Constantinople. The figures are less elongated than their earlier counterparts, and the background is painted in a brilliant blue with golden stars.

The central image of Christ on the cross is surrounded by mourners, including his mother. The figures in this calm scene have mass. While the Virgin Mary still appears to be a mass of robes, her drapery is more subtly rendered. The bodies of the other figures are more easily denoted by the modeling of their robes. The drapery is still reliant on deep folds, but the folds are no longer contorted and are less schematic. While less dramatic and more serene, there is an underlying emotion of sadness that is subtly depicted by the sway of Christ's body.

Crucifixion: This is painted behind the altar of the Katholikon of the monastery of the Virgin at Studenica.

The Cretan School

Over the course of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, the Byzantine Empire lost much of its territory. However, its artistic traditions continued for centuries in areas such as Crete.

Established, in the fifteenth century, the Cretan School is known for its distinct style of icon painting that was influenced by both Western and Eastern traditions. Even before the fall of Constantinople, the leading Byzantine artists were leaving the capital to settle in Crete. This migration continued in the following years and reached its peak after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The early icons produced by the Cretan School follow many of the earlier Byzantine traditions. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the styles of Italian and Northern Renaissance artists grew in popularity, the rendering of the human body and illusionistic space became increasingly realistic.

However, many icons retained the traditional gold backgrounds. The influence of the Renaissance, in which the notion of the artistic genius arose, can also be seen in the increasing attachment of artists' names to their creations.

In the following examples by El Greco (1541–1614) and Emmanuel Tzanes (1610–1690), we can see the transition from the Late Byzantine style (in which the contours of the body were acknowledged beneath the drapery and attempts at realistic perspective were still evolving) to the Post-Byzantine style, which depicts a realistic recession of space and dynamic bodily poses.

El Greco's Dormition of the Virgin: The Late Byzantine realism in the rendering of the body is evident here, as the mourners assume a variety of poses. The solemn facial expressions and body language reflect the somber mood of the final sleep of the Virgin Mary.

Emmanuel Tzanes' St. Mark the Evangelist: In this icon, St. Mark assumes a dynamic pose, including the dramatic head turn, which would become a common attribute in images of the inspired artist over the course of the next few centuries. Tzanes's stylized rendering of the lion can be explained by his never having seen one in nature or in visual culture.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Pammakaristos_Church_fragments.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3867227. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sant Salvador de Khora - Interior. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sant_Salvador_de_Khora_-_Interior.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- LatinEmpire2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:LatinEmpire2.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Christ healing a paralitic in Caphernaum. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_healing_a_paralitic_in_Caphernaum.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Chora Church. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chora_Church. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pammakaristos Church. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pammakaristos_Church. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fourth Crusade. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Crusade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ottoman. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Ottoman. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kariye camii innen2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kariye_camii_innen2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kariye ic. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kariye_ic.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chora Church interior March 2008. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chora_Church_interior_March_2008.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- HSX Millingen 1912 fig 105. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HSX_Millingen_1912_fig_105.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Genealogy of Jesus mosaic at Chora (1). **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Genealogy_of_Jesus_mosaic_at_Chora_(1).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- HSX Koimetesis. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HSX_Koimetesis.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dado. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dado. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Beard. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Beard#Christianity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Depiction of Jesus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Depiction_of_Jesus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chora Church. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chora_Church. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mandorla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/mandorla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Koimesis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/koimesis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Narthex. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/narthex. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Parecclesion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/parecclesion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- GerBold_StNicolay.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17104237. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 410px-Feodorovskaya_u0441ast_copper_icon.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8359660. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Angelsatmamre-trinity-rublev-1410. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Angelsatmamre-trinity-rublev-1410.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kievan Rus'. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kievan_Rus%27. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Our Lady of Kazan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Kazan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Peter the Great. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_the_Great. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Trinity (Andrei Rublev). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_(Andrei_Rublev). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Russian Icons. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_icons. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Old Testament Trinity. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Old_Testament_Trinity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Andrei Rublev. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Rublev. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tempera. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tempera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prefiguration. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prefiguration. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ohrid annunciation icon. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ohrid_annunciation_icon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iconostasis in Moscow. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Iconostasis_in_Moscow.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Studenica Christi. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Studenica_Christi.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 384px-Tzanes_Emmanuel_-_St_Mark_the_Evangelist_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23718141. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 408px-Dormition_El_Greco.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17951018. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Emmanuel Tzanes. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_Tzanes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Eastern Orthodox Church Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_church_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cretan School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cretan_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- El Greco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of the Byzantine Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Byzantine_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Studenica Monastery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Studenica_monastery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ohrid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohrid%23Medieval. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iconostasis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconostasis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Deesis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Deesis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iconostasis. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconostasis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Katholikon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Katholikon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 9.3: Late Byzantine Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Islamic Art

10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art

This page titled 10: Islamic Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art

Islamic Art

Islamic art encompasses visual arts produced from the seventh century onwards by culturally Islamic populations.

Learning Objectives

Identify the influences and the specific attributes of Islamic art

Try It

Key Points

- Islamic art is not art of a specific religion, time, place, or of a single medium . Instead it spans some 1400 years, covers many lands and populations, and includes a range of artistic fields including architecture, calligraphy , painting, glass, ceramics , and textiles, among others.
- Islamic religious art differs from Christian religious art in that it is non-figural because many Muslims believe that the depiction of the human form is idolatry , and thereby a sin against God, forbidden in the Qur'an. Calligraphy and architectural elements are given important religious significance in Islamic art.
- Islamic art developed from many sources: Roman, early Christian art, and Byzantine styles ; Sassanian art of pre-Islamic Persia; Central Asian styles brought by various nomadic incursions, and Chinese influences appear on Islamic painting, pottery , and textiles.

Key Terms

- **Qu'ran**: The central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be the verbatim word of God (Arabic: Allah). It is widely regarded as the finest piece of literature in the Arabic language.
- **arabesque**: A repetitive, stylized pattern based on a geometrical floral or vegetal design.
- **idolatry**: The worship of idols.
- **monotheistic**: Believing in a single god, deity, spirit, etc., especially for an organized religion, faith, or creed.

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a book considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God (Allah) and the teachings of Muhammad , who is considered to be the last prophet of God. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim.

Most Muslims are of two denominations: Sunni (75–90%),[7] or Shia (10–20%). Its essential religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam, which are basic concepts and obligatory acts of worship, and the following of Islamic law, which touches on every aspect of life and society. The five pillars are:

1. Shahadah (belief or confession of faith)
2. Salat (worship in the form of prayer)
3. Sawm Ramadan (fasting during the month of Ramadan)
4. Zakat (alms or charitable giving)
5. Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime)

Islamic Art

Islamic art encompasses the visual arts produced from the seventh century onward by both Muslims and non-Muslims who lived within the territory that was inhabited by, or ruled by, culturally Islamic populations. It is thus a very difficult art to define because it spans some 1400 years, covering many lands and populations. This art is also not of a specific religion, time, place, or single medium. Instead Islamic art covers a range of artistic fields including architecture, calligraphy, painting, glass, ceramics, and textiles, among others.

Islamic art is not restricted to religious art, but instead includes all of the art of the rich and varied cultures of Islamic societies. It frequently includes secular elements and elements that are forbidden by some Islamic theologians. Islamic religious art differs greatly from Christian religious art traditions.

Because figural representations are generally considered to be forbidden in Islam, the word takes on religious meaning in art as seen in the tradition of calligraphic inscriptions. Calligraphy and the decoration of manuscript Qu'rans is an important aspect of Islamic art as the word takes on religious and artistic significance.

Islamic architecture, such as mosques and palatial gardens of paradise, are also embedded with religious significance. While examples of Islamic figurative painting do exist, and may cover religious scenes, these examples are typically from secular contexts, such as the walls of palaces or illuminated books of poetry.

Other religious art, such as glass mosque lamps, Girih tiles, woodwork, and carpets usually demonstrate the same style and motifs as contemporary secular art, although they exhibit more prominent religious inscriptions.

A calligraphic panel by Mustafa Râkim (late 18th–early 19th century) : Islamic art has focused on the depiction of patterns and Arabic calligraphy, rather than on figures, because it is feared by many Muslims that the depiction of the human form is idolatry. The panel reads: "God, there is no god but He, the Lord of His prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Lord of all that has been created."

Islamic art was influenced by Greek, Roman, early Christian, and Byzantine art styles, as well as the Sassanian art of pre-Islamic Persia. Central Asian styles were brought in with various nomadic incursions; and Chinese influences had a formative effect on Islamic painting, pottery, and textiles.

Themes of Islamic Art

There are repeating elements in Islamic art, such as the use of stylized , geometrical floral or vegetal designs in a repetition known as the arabesque . The arabesque in Islamic art is often used to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible and infinite nature of God. Some scholars believe that mistakes in repetitions may be intentionally introduced as a show of humility by artists who believe only God can produce perfection.

Arabesque inlays at the Mughal Agra Fort, India: Geometrical designs in repetition, know as Arabesque, are used in Islamic art to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible, and infinite nature of God.

Typically, though not entirely, Islamic art has focused on the depiction of patterns and Arabic calligraphy, rather than human or animal figures, because it is believed by many Muslims that the depiction of the human form is idolatry and thereby a sin against God that is forbidden in the Qur'an.

However, depictions of the human form and animals can be found in all eras of Islamic secular art. Depictions of the human form in art intended for the purpose of worship is considered idolatry and is forbidden in Islamic law, known as Sharia law.

Islamic Architecture

Islamic architecture encompasses a wide range of styles and the principal example is the mosque.

Learning Objectives

Describe the development of mosques, and their different features during different periods and dynasties

Try It

Key Points

- A specifically recognizable Islamic architectural style emerged soon after Muhammad's time that incorporated Roman building traditions with the addition of localized adaptations of the former Sassanid and Byzantine models.
- The Islamic mosque has historically been both a place of prayer and a community meeting space . The early mosques are believed to be inspired by Muhammad's home in Medina, which was the first mosque.

Key Terms

- **mosque**: A place of worship for Muslims, corresponding to a church or synagogue in other religions, often having at least one minaret. In Arabic: masjid.
- **mihrab**: A semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque, that indicates the qibla (direction of Mecca), and into which the imam prays.
- **minaret**: The tall slender tower of an Islamic mosque, from which the muezzin recites the adhan (call to prayer).

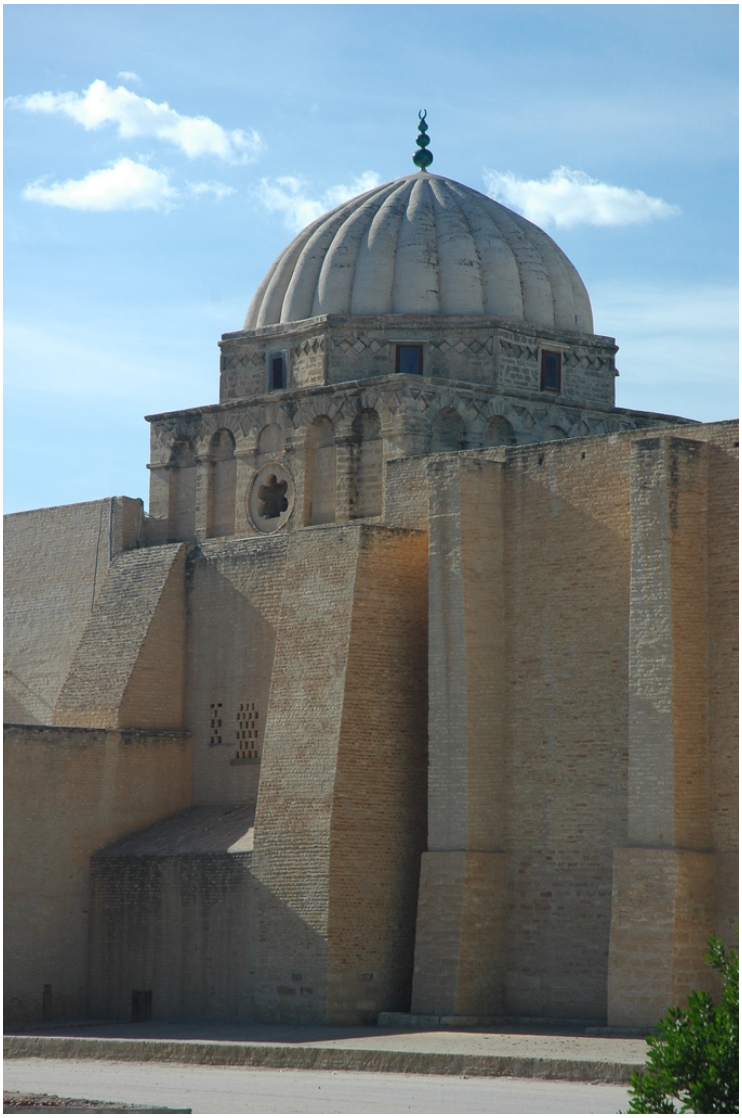
Islamic Architecture

Islamic architecture encompasses a wide range of both secular and religious styles. The principal Islamic architectural example is the mosque. A specifically recognizable Islamic architectural style emerged soon after Muhammad's time that incorporated Roman building traditions with the addition of localized adaptations of the former Sassanid and Byzantine models.

Early Mosques

The Islamic mosque has historically been both a place of prayer and a community meeting space. The early mosques are believed to be inspired by Muhammad's home in Medina, which was the first mosque.

The Great Mosque of Kairouan (in Tunisia) is one of the best preserved and most significant examples of early great mosques. Founded in 670, it contains all of the architectural features that distinguish early mosques: a minaret , a large courtyard surrounded by porticos , and a hypostyle prayer hall.



Dome of the mihrab (9th century) in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, also known as the Mosque of Uqba, in Kairouan, Tunisia: This is considered to be the ancestor of all the mosques in the western Islamic world.

Ottoman Mosques

Ottoman mosques and other architecture first emerged in the cities of Bursa and Edirne in the 14th and 15th centuries, developing from earlier Seljuk Turk architecture, with additional influences from Byzantine, Persian, and Islamic Mamluk traditions.

Sultan Mehmed II would later fuse European traditions in his rebuilding programs at Istanbul in the 19th century. Byzantine styles as seen in the Hagia Sophia served as particularly important models for Ottoman mosques, such as the mosque constructed by Sinan.

Building reached its peak in the 16th century when Ottoman architects mastered the technique of building vast inner spaces surmounted by seemingly weightless yet incredibly massive domes , and achieved perfect harmony between inner and outer spaces, as well as articulated light and shadow.

They incorporated vaults , domes, square dome plans, slender corner minarets, and columns into their mosques, which became sanctuaries of transcendently aesthetic and technical balance, as may be observed in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey.

The Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey: The Blue Mosque represents the culmination of Ottoman construction with its numerous domes, slender minarets and overall harmony.

Architecture flourished in the Safavid Dynasty , attaining a high point with the building program of Shah Abbas in Isfahan, which included numerous gardens, palaces (such as Ali Qapu), an immense bazaar, and a large imperial mosque. Isfahan, the capital of both the Seljuk and Safavid dynasties, bears the most prominent samples of the Safavid architecture, such as the the Imperial Mosque, which was constructed in the years after Shah Abbas I permanently moved the capital there in 1598.

Imperial Mosque, Isfahan, Iran: Isfahan, the capital of both the Seljuk and Safavid dynasties, bears the most prominent samples of the Safavid architecture.

Islamic Glass Making

Glassmaking was the most important Islamic luxury art of the early Middle Ages.

Learning Objectives

Describe the art of Islamic glass

Try It

Key Points

- Between the 8th and early 11th centuries, the emphasis in luxury glass was on effects achieved by manipulating the surface of the glass, initially by incising into the glass on a wheel, and later by cutting away the background to leave a design in relief .

- Lustre painting uses techniques similar to lustreware in pottery and dates back to the 8th century in Egypt; it became widespread in the 12th century.

Key Terms

- **luxury arts**: Highly decorative goods made of precious materials for the wealthy classes.
- **glassmaking**: The craft or industry of producing glass.

Islamic Glass

For most of the Middle Ages , Islamic luxury glass was the most sophisticated in Eurasia , exported to both Europe and China. Islam took over much of the traditional glass-producing territory of Sassanian and Ancient Roman glass. Since figurative decoration played a small part in pre-Islamic glass, the change in style was not abrupt—except that the whole area initially formed a political whole, and, for example, Persian innovations were now almost immediately taken up in Egypt.

For this reason it is often impossible to distinguish between the various centers of production (of which Egypt, Syria, and Persia were the most important), except by scientific analysis of the material, which itself has difficulties. From various documentary references, glassmaking and glass-trading seems to have been a specialty of the Jewish minority.

Between the 8th and early 11th centuries, the emphasis in luxury glass was on effects achieved by manipulating the surface of the glass, initially by incising into the glass on a wheel, and later by cutting away the background to leave a design in relief. The very massive Hedwig glasses, only found in Europe, but normally considered Islamic (or possibly from Muslim craftsmen in Norman Sicily), are an example of this, though they are puzzlingly late in date.

These and other glass pieces probably represented cheaper versions of vessels of carved rock crystal (clear quartz)—themselves influenced by earlier glass vessels—and there is some evidence that at this period glass and hard-stone cutting were regarded as the same craft. From the 12th century, the glass industry in Persia and Mesopotamia declined, and the main production of luxury glass shifted to Egypt and Syria. Throughout this period, local centers made simpler wares, such as Hebron glass in Palestine.

The Luck of Edenhall : This is a 13th-century Syrian beaker, in England since the Middle Ages. For most of the Middle Ages, Islamic glass was the most sophisticated in Eurasia, exported to both Europe and China.

Lustre painting

Lustre painting, by techniques similar to lustreware in pottery, dates back to the 8th century in Egypt, and involves the application of metallic pigments during the glass-making process. Another technique used by artisans was decoration with threads of glass of a different color, worked into the main surface, and sometimes manipulated by combing and other effects.

Gilded, painted, and enameled glass were added to the repertoire, as were shapes and motifs borrowed from other media , such as pottery and metalwork . Some of the finest work was in mosque lamps donated by a ruler or wealthy man.

As decoration grew more elaborate, the quality of the basic glass decreased, and it often exhibited bubbles and a brownish-yellow tinge. Aleppo ceased to be a major center after the Mongol invasion of 1260, and Timur appears to have ended the Syrian glass

industry around 1400 by carrying off the skilled workers to Samarkand. By about 1500, the Venetians were receiving large orders for mosque lamps.

Some of the finest work was in mosque lamps donated by a ruler or wealthy man. As decoration grew more elaborate, the quality of the basic glass decreased, and it often exhibited bubbles and a brownish-yellow tinge. Aleppo ceased to be a major center after the Mongol invasion of 1260, and Timur appears to have ended the Syrian industry around 1400 by carrying off the skilled workers to Samarkand. By about 1500, the Venetians were receiving large orders for mosque lamps.

Mosque lamp : Produced in Egypt, c. 1360.

Islamic Calligraphy

Calligraphic design was omnipresent in Islamic art in the Middle Ages, and is seen in all types of art including architecture and the decorative arts.

Learning Objectives

Explain the purpose and characteristics of Islamic calligraphy

? Try It

Key Points

- In a religion where figural representations are considered an act of idolatry , it is no surprise that the word and its artistic representation became an important aspect in Islamic art.
- The earliest form of Arabic calligraphy is Kufic script .
- Besides Quranic verses, other inscriptions include verses of poetry, and inscriptions recording ownership or donation.

Key Terms

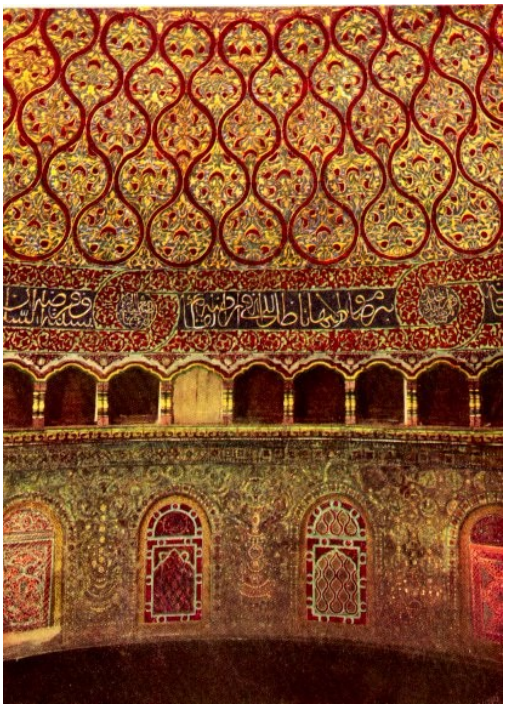
- **Kufic script**: The earliest form of Arabic calligraphy, noted for its angular form.
- **calligraphy**: The art of writing letters and words with decorative strokes.

In a religion where figural representations are considered an act of idolatry, it is no surprise that the word and its artistic representation became an important aspect in Islamic art. The most important religious text in Islam is the Quran, which is believed to be the word of God. There are many examples of calligraphy and calligraphic inscriptions pertaining to verses from the Quran in Islamic arts.

9th century Quran: This early Quran demonstrates the Kufic script, noted for its angular form and as the earliest form of Arabic calligraphy .

The earliest form of Arabic calligraphy is Kufic script, which is noted for its angular form. Arabic is read from right to left and only the consonants are written. The black ink in the image above from a 9th century Quran marks the consonants for the reader. The red dots that are visible on the page note the vowels.

However, calligraphic design is not limited to the book in Islamic art. Calligraphy is found in several different types of art, such as architecture. The interior of the Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem, circa 691), for example, features calligraphic inscriptions of verses from the Quran as well as from additional sources. As in Europe in the Middle Ages , religious exhortations such as Quranic verses may be included in secular objects, especially coins, tiles, and metalwork .



Interior view of the Dome of the Rock : The interior of The Dome of the Rock features many calligraphic inscriptions, from both the Quran and other sources; it demonstrates the importance of calligraphy in Islamic art and its use in several different media.

Calligraphic inscriptions were not exclusive to the Quran, but also included verses of poetry or recorded ownership or donation. Calligraphers were highly regarded in Islam, which reinforces the importance of the word and its religious and artistic significance.

Islamic Book Painting

Manuscript painting in the late medieval Islamic world reached its height in Persia, Syria, Iraq, and the Ottoman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the origin and development of Islamic manuscript painting

Try It

Key Points

- The art of the Persian book was born under the Ilkhanid dynasty and encouraged by the patronage of aristocrats for large illuminated manuscripts .
- Islamic manuscript painting witnessed its first golden age in the 13th century when it was influenced by the Byzantine visual vocabulary and combined with Mongol facial types from 12th-century book frontispieces.
- Under the rule of the Safavids in Iran (1501 to 1786), the art of manuscript illumination achieves new heights, in particular in the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, an immense copy of Ferdowsi's epic poem that contains more than 250 paintings.
- The medieval Islamic texts called Maqamat were some of the earliest coffee-table books and among the first Islamic art to mirror daily life.
- Masterpieces of Ottoman manuscript illustration include the two books of festivals, one from the end of the 16th century and the other from the era of Sultan Murad III.

Key Terms

- **Mongols**: An umbrella term for a large group of Mongolic and Turkic tribes united under the rule of Genghis Khan in the 13th century.
- **illuminated manuscripts**: A book in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.
- **miniature**: An illustration in an ancient or medieval illuminated manuscript.
- **muraqqa**: An album in book form containing Islamic miniature paintings and specimens of Islamic calligraphy, normally from several different sources, and perhaps other matter.
- **Maqamat**: The plural for Maqāma, an Arabic literary genre of rhymed prose with intervals of poetry that often ruminates on spiritual topics.

Islamic Book Painting

Book painting in the late medieval Islamic world reached its height in Persia, Syria, Iraq, and the Ottoman Empire . The art form blossomed across the different regions and was inspired by a range of cultural reference points.

The evolution of book painting first began in the 13th century, when the Mongols, under the leadership of Genghis Khan, swept through the Islamic world. Upon the death of Genghis Khan, his empire was divided among his sons and dynasties formed: the Yuan in China, the Ilkhanids in Iran, and the Golden Horde in northern Iran and southern Russia.

The Ilkhanids

The Ilkhanids were a rich civilization that developed under the little khans in Iran. Architectural activity intensified as the Mongols became sedentary yet retained traces of their nomadic origins, such as the north–south orientation of buildings. Persian, Islamic, and East Asian traditions melded together during this period and a process of Iranization took place, in which construction according to previously established types, such as the Iranian-plan mosques , was resumed.

The art of the Persian book was born under the Ilkhanid dynasty and encouraged by the patronage of aristocrats for large illuminated manuscripts, such as the Jami' al-tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani. Islamic book painting witnessed its first golden age in the 13th century, mostly within Syria and Iraq.

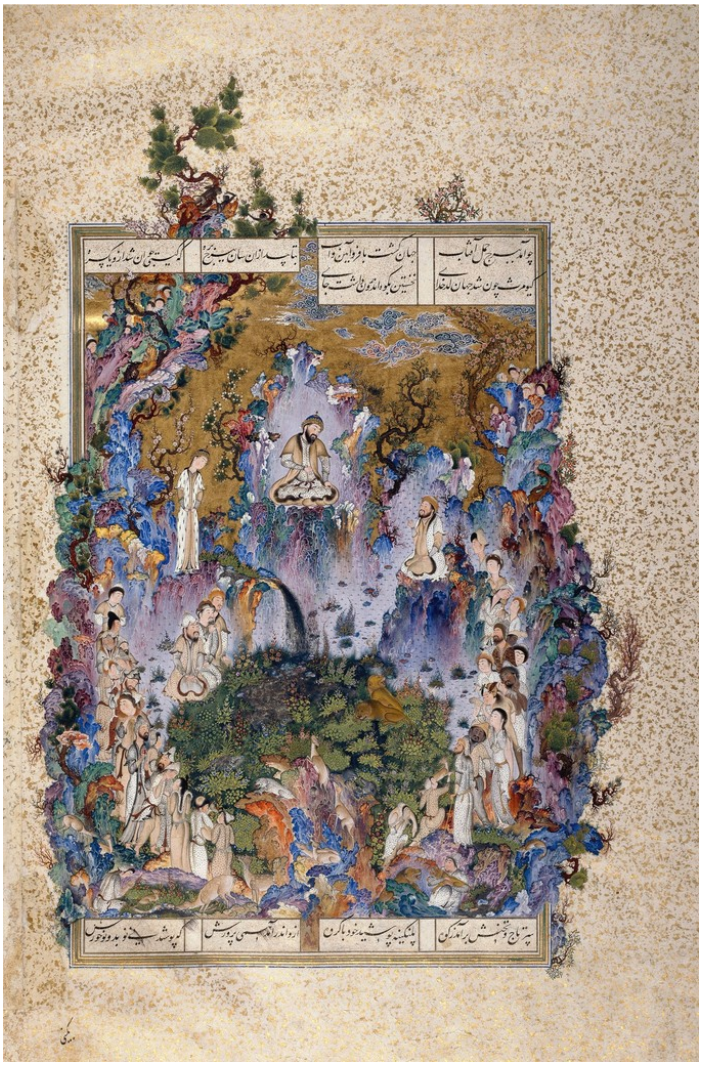
Miniatures

The tradition of the Persian miniature (a small painting on paper) developed during this period, and it strongly influenced the Ottoman miniature of Turkey and the Mughal miniature in India. Because illuminated manuscripts were an art of the court, and not seen in public, constraints on the depiction of the human figure were much more relaxed and the human form is represented with frequency within this medium.

Influence from the Byzantine visual vocabulary (blue and gold coloring, angelic and victorious motifs, symbology of drapery) was combined with Mongol facial types seen in 12th-century book frontispieces. Chinese influences in Islamic book painting include the early adoption of the vertical format natural to a book. Motifs such as peonies, clouds, dragons, and phoenixes were adapted from China as well, and incorporated into manuscript illumination.

Mongol soldiers, in Jami al-tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani: The Jāmi al-tawārīkh is a work of literature and history, produced by the Mongol Ilkhanate in Persia. The breadth of the work has caused it to be called the first world history and its lavish illustrations and calligraphy required the efforts of hundreds of scribes and artists.

The largest commissions of illustrated books were usually classics of Persian poetry, such as the Shahnameh. Under the rule of the Safavids in Iran (1501 to 1786), the art of manuscript illumination achieved new heights. The most noteworthy example of this is the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, an immense copy of Ferdowsi's epic poem that contains more than 250 paintings.



The Court of Gayumars, from the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp: Illuminated manuscripts of the Shahnameh were often commissioned by royal patrons.

Maqamat and Albums

The medieval Islamic texts called Maqamat that were copied and illustrated by Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, were some of the earliest coffee-table books. They were among the first texts in Islamic art to hold a mirror to daily life, portraying humorous stories and showing little adherence to prior pictorial traditions.

In the 17th century a new type of painting developed based around the album (muraqqa). The albums were the creations of connoisseurs who bound together single sheets of paintings, drawings, or calligraphy by various artists; they were sometimes excised from earlier books and other times created as independent works.

The paintings of Reza Abbasi figure largely in this new form of book art. The form depicts one or two larger figures, typically idealized beauties in a garden setting, and often use the grisaille techniques previously used for background border paintings .

Mughal and Ottoman Manuscripts

The Mughals and Ottomans both produced lavish manuscripts of more recent history with the autobiographies of the Mughal emperors and purely military chronicles of Turkish conquests. Portraits of rulers developed in the 16th century, and later in Persia, where they became very popular.

Mughal portraits, normally in profile, are very finely drawn in a realist style , while the best Ottoman ones are vigorously stylized . Album miniatures typically featured picnic scenes, portraits of individuals, or (in India especially) animals, or idealized youthful beauties of either sex.

Masterpieces of Ottoman manuscript illustration include the two books of festivals, one from the end of the 16th century and the other from the era of Sultan Murad III. These books contain numerous illustrations and exhibit a strong Safavid influence, perhaps inspired by books captured in the course of the Ottoman–Safavid wars of the 16th century.

Islamic Ceramics

Islamic art has notable achievements in ceramics that reached heights unmatched by other cultures.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how developments such as tin-opacified glazing and stonepaste ceramics made Islamic ceramics some of the most advanced of its time

Try It

Key Points

- The first Islamic opaque glazes date to around the 8th century, and another significant contribution was the development of stonepaste ceramics in 9th century Iraq.
- Lusterwares with iridescent colors were either invented or considerably developed in Persia and Syria from the 9th century onward.
- The techniques, shapes, and decorative motifs of Chinese ceramics were admired and emulated by Islamic potters, especially after the Mongol and Timurid invasions.
- The Hispano–Moresque style emerged in the 8th century, with more refined production happening later, presumably by Muslim potters working in areas reconquered by Christian kingdoms.

Key Terms

- **Hispano–Moresque style**: A style of Islamic pottery created in Al-Andaluz, or Muslim Spain, which continued to be produced under Christian rule in styles that blended Islamic and European elements.
- **lusterware**: A type of pottery or porcelain having an iridescent metallic glaze.
- **glaze**: The vitreous coating of pottery or porcelain, or a transparent or semi-transparent layer of paint.
- **ceramics**: Inorganic, nonmetallic solids created by the action of heat and their subsequent cooling. Most common ceramics are crystalline and the earliest uses of ceramics were in pottery.

Islamic Ceramics

Islamic art has notable achievements in ceramics, both in pottery and tiles for buildings, which reached heights unmatched by other cultures . Early pottery had usually been unglazed, but a tin-opacified glazing technique was developed by Islamic potters. The first Islamic opaque glazes can be found as blue-painted ware in Basra, dating to around the 8th century.

Another significant contribution was the development of stonepaste ceramics, originating from 9th century Iraq. The first industrial complex for glass and pottery production was built in Ar-Raqqah, Syria, in the 8th century. Other centers for innovative pottery in the Islamic world included Fustat (from 975 to 1075), Damascus (from 1100 to around 1600), and Tabriz (from 1470 to 1550).

Lusterware

Lusterware is a type of pottery or porcelain that has an iridescent metallic glaze. Luster first began as a painting technique in glassmaking , which was then translated to pottery in Mesopotamia in the 9th century.

10th century dish: Islamic art has very notable achievements in ceramics, both in pottery and tiles for walls, which reached heights unmatched by other cultures. This dish is from East Persia or Central Asia.

The techniques, shapes, and decorative motifs of Chinese ceramics were admired and emulated by Islamic potters, especially after the Mongol and Timurid invasions. Until the Early Modern period, Western ceramics had little influence, but Islamic pottery was highly sought after in Europe, and was often copied.

An example of this is the albarello, a type of earthenware jar originally designed to hold apothecary ointments and dry drugs. The development of this type of pharmacy jar had its roots in the Islamic Middle East. Hispano–Moresque examples were exported to Italy, inspiring the earliest Italian examples, from 15th century Florence.

Hispano–Moresque Style

The Hispano–Moresque style emerged in Al-Andaluz, or Muslim Spain, in the 8th century, under Egyptian influence. More refined production happened much later, presumably by Muslim potters who worked in the areas reconquered by the Christian kingdoms.

The Hispano–Moresque style mixed Islamic and European elements in its designs and was exported to neighboring European countries. The style introduced two ceramic techniques to Europe:

1. Glazing with an opaque white tin-glaze.
2. Painting in metallic lusters.

Ottoman Iznik pottery produced most of the finest ceramics of the 16th century—tiles and large vessels boldly decorated with floral motifs that were influenced by Chinese Yuan and Ming ceramics. These were still in earthenware, since porcelain was not made in Islamic countries until modern times.

The medieval Islamic world also painted pottery with animal and human imagery . Examples are found throughout the medieval Islamic world, particularly in Persia and Egypt.

Islamic Textiles

The most important textile produced in the Medieval and Early Modern Islamic Empires was the carpet.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the making and designs of Islamic textiles

Try It

Key Points

- The production and trade of textiles pre-dates Islam , and had long been important to Middle Eastern cultures and cities, many of which flourished due to the Silk Road .
- When the Islamic dynasties formed and grew more powerful they gained control over textile production in the region, which was arguably the most important craft of the era.

Key Terms

- **textile arts**: The production of arts and crafts that use plant, animal, or synthetic fibers to create objects.

Islam and the Textile Arts

The textile arts refer to the production of arts and crafts that use plant, animal, or synthetic fibers to create objects. These objects can be for everyday use, or they can be decorative and luxury items. The production and trade of textiles pre-dates Islam, and had long been important to Middle Eastern cultures and cities, many of which flourished due to the Silk Road.

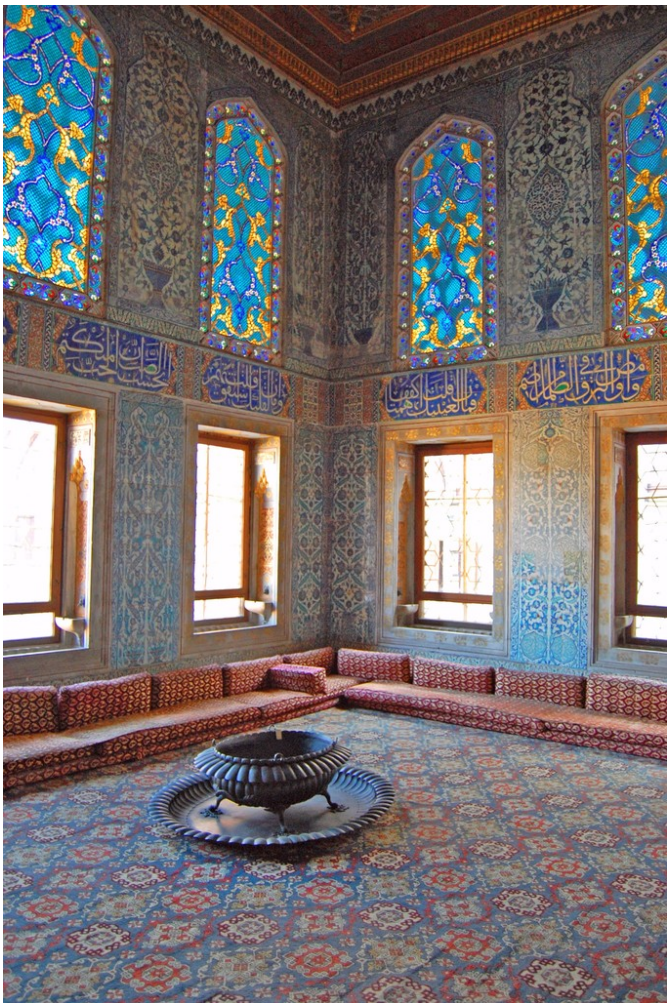
When the Islamic dynasties formed and grew more powerful they gained control over textile production in the region, which was arguably the most important craft of the era. The most important textile produced in Medieval and Early Modern Islamic Empires was the carpet.

The Ottoman Empire and Carpet Production

The art of carpet weaving was particularly important in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman state was founded by Turkish tribes in northwestern Anatolia in 1299 and became an empire in 1453 after the momentous conquest of Constantinople.

Stretching across Asia, Europe, and Africa, the Empire was vast and long lived, lasting until 1922 when the monarchy was abolished in Turkey. Within the Ottoman Empire, carpets were immensely valued as decorative furnishings and for their practical value . They were used not just on floors but also as wall and door hangings, where they provided additional insulation.

These intricately knotted carpets were made of silk, or a combination of silk and cotton, and were often rich in religious and other symbolism. Hereke silk carpets, which were made in the coastal town of Hereke, were the most valued of the Ottoman carpets because of their fine weave. The Hereke carpets were typically used to furnish royal palaces.



Carpet and interior of the Harem room in Topkapi Palace, Istanbul: The Ottoman Turks were famed for the quality of their finely woven and intricately knotted silk carpets.

Persian Carpets

The Iranian Safavid Empire (1501–1786) is distinguished from the Mughal and Ottoman dynasties by the Shia faith of its shahs, which was the majority Islamic denomination in Persia. Safavid art is contributed to several aesthetic traditions, particularly to the textile arts.

In the sixteenth century, carpet weaving evolved from a nomadic and peasant craft to a well-executed industry that used specialized design and manufacturing techniques on quality fibers such as silk. The carpets of Ardabil, for example, were commissioned to commemorate the Safavid dynasty and are now considered to be the best examples of classical Persian weaving, particularly for their use of graphical perspective.

Textiles became a large export, and Persian weaving became one of the most popular imported goods of Europe. Islamic carpets were a luxury item in Europe and there are several examples of European Renaissance paintings that document the presence of Islamic textiles in European homes during that time.

The Ardabil Carpet, Persia, 1540: The Ardabil Carpet is the finest example of 16th century Persian carpet production.

Indonesian Batik

Islamic textile production, however, was not limited to the carpet. Royal factories were founded for the purpose of textile production that also included cloth and garments.

The development and refinement of Indonesian batik cloth was closely linked to Islam. The Islamic prohibition on certain images encouraged batik design to become more abstract and intricate. Realistic depictions of animals and humans are rare on traditional batik, but serpents, puppet-shaped humans, and the Garuda of pre-Islamic mythology are all commonplace.

Although its existence in Indonesia pre-dates Islam, batik reached its high point in the royal Muslim courts, such as Mataram and Yogyakarta, whose Muslim rulers encouraged and patronized batik production. Today, batik has undergone a revival, and cloths are used for other purposes besides wearing, such as wrapping the Quran.

Javanese court batik: The development and refinement of Indonesian batik cloth was closely linked to Islam.

Contributors and Attributions

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Mustafa Rakim, calligraphic panel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mustafa_Rakim,_calligraphic_panel.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- RedFortAgra-Musamman-Burj-20080211-2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RedFortAgra-Musamman-Burj-20080211-2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Islam. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Five Pillars of Islam. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Pillars_of_Islam. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Islamic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qu'ran. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qu'ran. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- idolatry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/idolatry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- monotheistic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/monotheistic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sultan_Ahmed_Mosque_Istanbul_Turkey_retouched.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sultan_Ahmed_Mosque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Isfahan_Royal_Mosque_general.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shah_Mosque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- TUNISIE KAIROUAN 04. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TUNISIE_KAIROUAN_04.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- University of al-Karaouine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_al-Karaouine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mihrab. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihrab. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Fatimid architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatimid_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Islamic architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fatimid Caliphate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatimid_Caliphate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- minaret. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/minaret. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mihrab. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mihrab. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mosque. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mosque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Luckofedenhall. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Luckofedenhall.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Egyptian_lamp_281360_AD29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque_lamp. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Islamic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fatimid Caliphate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatimid_Caliphate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- glassmaking. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/glassmaking. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/luxury-arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lustreware. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/lustreware. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MosqueOfOmar1914.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 9th Century Qur'an. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_calligraphy. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Dome of the Rock. **Provided by**: Wikipedia . **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Islamic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Islamic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mongol soldiers by Rashid al-Din 1305. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol_soldiers_by_Rashid_al-Din_1305.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The_Court_of_Gayumars.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahnameh_of_Shah_Tahmasp. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Islamic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- muraqqa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/muraqqa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mongols. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongols. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maqamat. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maqamat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- painted minatures. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/painted%20miniatures. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Illuminated Manuscripts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/illuminated%20manuscript. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Iran orientale o asia centrale, coppa, x sec 02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Iran_orientale_o_asia_centrale,_coppa,_x_sec_02.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known*

Copyright

- Islamic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hispano-Moresque style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispano-Moresque%20style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ceramics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/ceramics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- glaze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/glaze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lusterware. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lusterware. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Batik_Indonesia.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Batik_Indonesia.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inside_the_Harem2C_Topkapi_Palace2C_Istanbul2C_Turkey_28Nov_200929.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Inside_the_Harem,_Topkapi_Palace,_Istanbul,_Turkey_(Nov_2009).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ardabil_Carpet.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardabil_Carpet. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The East. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/212217/textbooks/world-art-history/islamic-art-8/later-islamic-art-71/the-east-363-8033/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Safavid Dynasty. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/212217/textbooks/world-art-history/islamic-art-8/the-ottom-safavid-and-mughai-dynasties-72/safavid-dynasty-369-5178/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Textile Arts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Textile_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ottoman Empire. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/212217/textbooks/world-art-history/islamic-art-8/the-ottom-safavid-and-mughai-dynasties-72/ottoman-empire-368-7111/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Art of South and Southeast Asia Before 1200 CE

11.1: Early Indus Valley Civilizations

11.2: Buddhist Art

11.3: Java and Cambodia

11.4: Art of Southeast Asia

This page titled 11: Art of South and Southeast Asia Before 1200 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

11.1: Early Indus Valley Civilizations

Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization was an urban civilization from 3300–1300 BCE that covered most of present-day Pakistan and northwest India.

Learning Objectives

Draw a timeline of the Early, Mature, and Late Harappan Phases of the Indus Civilization, noting the cultural accomplishments of each

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Indus Valley civilization is often separated into three phases: Early Harappan Phase (3300 BCE–2600 BCE), Mature Harappan Phase (2600 BCE–1900 BCE), and Late Harappan Phase (1900 BCE–1300 BCE).
- Cities of the ancient Indus Valley had multistory brick buildings, employed an advanced sanitation system, and used a unified system of weight and measurement.
- Most inhabitants of Indus Valley cities were artisans, and many artifacts —such as sculptures , seals, pottery, gold, jewelry, elaborate beadwork, and anatomically detailed figurines —have been excavated.
- There is evidence of an extensive trade network used to import raw materials, such as lapis lazuli and steatite , to the Indus Valley from distant regions.
- Between 400 and 600 distinct Indus symbols indicate a language found on ceramics , seals, and tablets, though the language remains entirely unknown to this day.

Key Terms

- **lapis lazuli**: A relatively rare, intensely blue, semi-precious stone.
- **steatite**: A stone that contains a large amount of the mineral talc and is easily malleable; also known as soapstone.
- **Bronze Age**: A period in a civilization's development when the most advanced metalworking has developed the techniques of smelting copper from natural outcroppings and allows it to be cast in bronze.

Overview: The Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization was a Bronze Age urban civilization that existed from 3300–1300 BCE and covered most of present-day Pakistan and northwest India. Situated around the Indus River and the Ghaggar-Hakra River, the Indus Valley civilization is also known as the Harappan civilization, named after Harappa, the first city to be excavated in the 1920s.

Inhabitants of the ancient Indus Valley developed new and notable techniques in handicraft, metallurgy , trade and transportation, systems of measurement, and urban planning.

Indus Valley civilization map: This map illustrates the extent of the Indus Valley Civilization, imposed over the borders of modern-day Pakistan and northwest India.

The civilization is often separated into three phases:

1. Early Harappan Phase (3300 BCE–2600 BCE).
2. Mature Harappan Phase (2600 BCE–1900 BCE).
3. Late Harappan Phase (1900 BCE–1300 BCE).

The Mature Harappan phase was the cultural high point, a time by which communities had grown into well-functioning, enormous urban centers. Many more artistic artifacts—such as ceramics, sculptures, seals, and jewelry—have been excavated from this time than from some civilizations that began centuries after its decline.

Numerous architectural remains have been found as well, including multistory buildings, baths, and dockyards. To date, over 1,052 cities and settlements have been found in the general area of the rivers and their tributaries, with the major ones being Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Dholavira, Rupar, Lothal, and Kalibangan.

Indus Valley Cities

The cities of the ancient Indus Valley consisted of highly functional, multistory buildings and structures constructed with uniform, kiln-burnt bricks. There is evidence of urban planning due to the uniformity of size and the style of the brickwork, as well as the organization of streets and neighborhoods into grid patterns, much like many current cities.

The first-known sanitation system, whereby waste-water was directed into covered drains that lined major streets and where clean water was obtained from wells in a designated room in the home, was employed in the ancient Indus Valley. This system of sewage and drainage is quite remarkable and was more advanced than some seen even today.

The Indus Valley Civilization is also known for developing a unified system of weight and measurement, as well as a decimal system and the first known use of negative numbers. In 2001, it was discovered that people from the early Harappan period had knowledge of proto-dentistry with the excavation of the first evidence of drilled human teeth.

Art in the Indus Valley

The Indus Valley period is well documented through the wealth of artifacts that were excavated from its magnificent cities. It is widely believed that most of the inhabitants of Indus Valley cities were tradespeople and artisans. Archaeologists have excavated

sculptures, seals, pottery, gold jewelry, elaborate beadwork, and anatomically detailed figurines in terracotta , ceramic, bronze, lead, tin, and steatite from the ancient Indus Valley area.

A number of bronze, gold, stone, and terracotta figures of girls in dance poses reveal the presence of some dance forms from the time, and a harp-like instrument depicted on a seal indicates the use of stringed musical instruments.

Similarities in the iconography and construction of excavated artifacts suggest the considerable mobility and trade networks of the Indus Valley inhabitants. Raw materials found only in distant regions, such as lapis lazuli and steatite, were imported for artistic use. It is believed that the trade networks of the Indus Valley reached as far as Afghanistan, coastal Persia, northern and western India, Mesopotamia , and Egypt.

Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro: A small, 4500-year-old bronze statuette of a dancing girl that was excavated in Mohenjo-daro in 1926.

The iconography of the artifacts from the Indus Valley region often depict quite anatomically correct animals and human figures. Similar to other civilizations of the same time period, such as Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, there are many depictions of female figures, or possibly fertility goddesses.

One motif shows a horned figure seated in a posture reminiscent of the lotus position and surrounded by animals; this was named Pashaputi (lord of cattle) by excavators. Between 400 and 600 distinct Indus symbols that indicate a language have been found on ceramics, seals, and tablets, though the language remains entirely unknown to this day.

Pashupati: Discovered at Mohenjo-daro, this seal depicts a seated, horned figure surrounded by animals, who is commonly interpreted to be Pashupati, the Lord of Cattle.

Indus Valley Society

Socially, the Indus Civilization appears to have been relatively egalitarian in nature. All homes within its various cities had access to water and drainage facilities and were generally equal in size. The evidence for planned settlements and the uniformity of Harappan artifacts suggests a strong organizational or governing force in the Indus Valley Civilization, though archaeological records provide no immediate answers.

Around 1800 BCE, signs of decline began to emerge in the Indus River Valley. By 1700 BCE, many of the cities had been abandoned. The reason for the decline of the civilization is unknown, but it is theorized to be due to enemy invasion throughout the area, a change in climate to significantly cooler and drier conditions, or the disappearance of the Ghaggar-Hakra River. After the collapse, regional cultures emerged that continued to show the influence of the Indus Valley Civilization to varying degrees.

Vedic and Upanishadic Periods

The Vedic period in India (c. 1700–500 BCE) is marked by the composition of the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the crafts and texts found during the Vedic Period in India

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Vedic civilization is thought to have been centered in the northern and northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- The transmission of stories in the Vedic period was by oral tradition alone, and a literary tradition began only in post-Vedic times.
- Crafts within Vedic culture included chariot-making, cart-making, carpentry, metal-working, tanning, bow-making, sewing, weaving, leather work, pottery, jewelry, dying, and vintnery.
- Pottery in the Vedic period is divided into black- and red-ware culture (BRW, c. 12th to 9th centuries BCE) and painted grey-ware culture (PGW, c. 1200 BCE to 600 BCE).
- The Vedas are a large body of texts that originate in the Vedic period. Composed in Vedic Sanskrit , the texts constitute the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism . The Upanishads are a collection of philosophical texts that form the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion. All Upanishads are associated with one of the four Vedas—Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda—and have been passed down in oral tradition.

Key Terms

- **Sanskrit**: A classical language of India (Latin would be its English equivalent), it is a liturgical language of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and one of the 23 official languages of India.
- **Vedic Period**: A period in Indian history during which the the oldest scriptures of Hinduism were composed; the time span of the period is uncertain, though is thought to span from 1700 BCE to about 500 BCE.
- **Upanishad**: An authorless, Hindu, religious and philosophical text considered to be an early source of the religion, it is found mostly as the concluding part of the Brahmanas and in the Aranyakas.

Overview: India's Vedic Period

The Vedic period (or Vedic age) in India was a period in history during which the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism, were composed. The time span of the period is uncertain, though it is thought to span from 1700 BCE to about 500 BCE, with 150 BCE suggested as a terminus ante quem (the latest possible time) for all Vedic Sanskrit literature. The transmission of stories in the Vedic period was by oral tradition alone, and a literary tradition began only in post-Vedic times.

The associated culture, sometimes referred to as the Vedic civilization, was probably centered in the northern and northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent, but it has now spread and constitutes the basis of contemporary Indian culture. In the 11th century BCE, the Vedic society transitioned from semi-nomadic life to settled agriculture.

This transition led to an increase in trade and increased competition and conflicts over resources, such as land and water. However, after 1000 BCE, the use of iron axes and ploughs enabled the clearing of jungles, and the Vedic kingdoms were able to expand along the Gangetic plains, ushering in the later Vedic age.

Map of northen India in the later Vedic Period: The Vedic civilization is thought to have been centered in the northern and northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent. Here, the river Indus is shown by its Sanskrit name Sindhu. The location of Vedic shakhas is labelled in green, and the Thar desert is in orange.

By the 6th century BCE, various political units consolidated into large kingdoms called Mahajanapadas. The process of urbanization began in these kingdoms, and commerce and travel—even over regions separated by large distances—became easy.

Sanskrit Literature

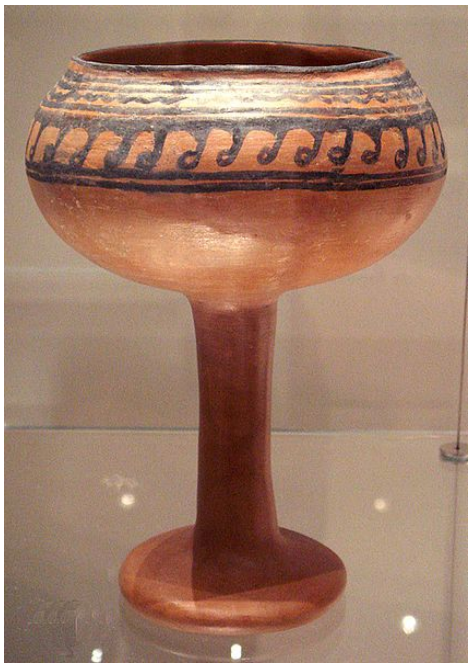
The end of Vedic India is marked by linguistic, cultural, and political changes. The grammar of Pāini marks a final apex in the codification of Sutra texts and, at the same time, the beginning of Classical Sanskrit. The invasion of Darius I of the Indus valley in the early 6th century BCE marks the beginning of outside influence that continued in the kingdoms of the Indo–Greeks. After the end of the Vedic period, the Mahajanapadas period in turn gave way to the Maurya Empire (from c. 320 BCE), which is considered to be the golden age of classical Sanskrit literature.

Crafts in the Vedic Period

Crafts within Vedic culture include that of chariot-making, cart-making, carpentry, metal-working (creating instruments such as razors, bangles, and axes), tanning, bow-making, sewing, weaving, and making mats from grass and reeds. Many of these might have required full-time specialists.

The use of iron implements (krishna-ayas or shyama-ayas, literally meaning black metal or dark metal) increased in the later Vedic age, as did new crafts and occupations such as leather work, pottery, astrology, jewelry, dying, and vintnery. Apart from copper, bronze , and gold, later Vedic texts also mention tin, lead, and silver.

The black- and red-ware culture (BRW) is an early, Iron Age culture associated with the post-Rigvedic Vedic civilization that dates roughly from the 12th to 9th centuries BCE. It was succeeded by the painted grey-ware culture (PGW), an Iron Age culture that corresponds to the later Vedic period and that lasted from roughly 1200 BCE to 600 BCE.



Goblet from Navdatoli, Malwa: An example of pottery work from the black- and red-ware culture (BRW), an early, Iron Age culture associated with the post-Rigvedic Vedic civilization.

Vedic Literature

The Vedas are a large body of texts that originated in the Vedic period. Composed in Vedic Sanskrit, the texts constitute the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.

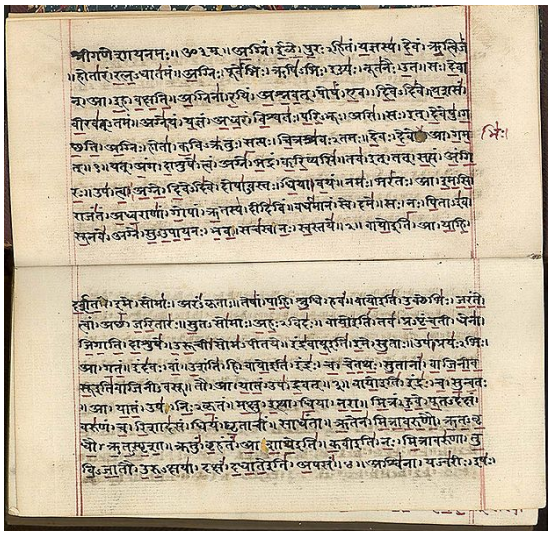
The reconstruction of the history of Vedic India is based on text-internal details. Linguistically, the Vedic texts could be classified in five chronological strata:

1. The Rigvedic text: The oldest of the Vedas, thought to have been composed roughly between 1700 and 1100 BCE .
2. The Mantra language texts: This period includes both the mantra and prose language of the Atharvaveda (Paippalada and Shaunakiya), the Rigveda Khilani, the Samaveda Samhita, and the mantras of the Yajurveda. This is the time of the early Iron Age in northwestern India and corresponds to the black- and red-ware (BRW) culture.
3. The Samhita prose texts: This period includes the Brahmana part (commentary on mantras and ritual) of the Black Yajurveda and corresponds with the painted grey-ware (PGW) culture from c. 900 BCE.
4. The Brahmana prose texts: The Brahmanas proper of the four Vedas belong to this period, as well as the Aranyakas, the oldest of the Upanishads, and the oldest Shrautasutras.
5. The Sutra language texts: This is the last stratum of Vedic Sanskrit leading up to c. 500 BCE, and is comprised of the bulk of the Śrauta and Grhya Sutras, as well as some Upanishads.

The Upanishads are a collection of philosophical texts that form the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion. The Sanskrit term upanishad means sitting down near, implying sitting near a teacher to receive instruction.

Also known as Vedanta, they are considered by orthodox Hindus to contain the revealed truths (Sruti) concerning the nature of ultimate reality (brahman), and describe the character and form of human salvation (moksha).

All Upanishads are associated with one of the four Vedas—Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda—and have been passed down in oral tradition. More than 200 Upanishads are known, and with the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahmasutra, the Mukhya Upanishads provide a foundation for several later schools of Indian philosophy.



Rigveda in Sanskrit on paper: The Rigveda text is the oldest of the Vedas, thought to have been composed roughly between 1700 and 1100 BCE.

Maurya Dynasty

The Maurya Dynasty was an extensive empire that occupied all of northwestern India from 321–185 BCE.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Barabar Caves, the Pillars of Ashoka, and other examples of architecture and art of the Maurya dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Maurya Dynasty represents the first time in history that the Indian subcontinent was united under a single government.
- The most renowned emperor of the dynasty, Emperor Ashoka, is famous for propagating the Buddhist religion and preaching non-violence throughout India.
- Emperor Ashoka is responsible for the Pillars of Ashoka, as well as building more than 80,000 stupas .
- The Barabar Caves, the Mahabodhi Temple, and the Great Stupas at Sanchi are examples of the architecture from the Maurya period.

Key Terms

- **dynasty**: A series of rulers from one family.
- **stupa**: A dome-shaped Buddhist monument, used to house Buddhist relics.

Overview: The Maurya Dynasty

The Maurya Empire was a powerful Iron Age empire in ancient India ruled by the Maurya Dynasty from 321 to 185 BCE. Founded by Chandragupta Maurya, who overthrew the previous Nanda Dynasty, the empire had fully occupied Northwestern India by 320 BCE.

With an area of 5 million square kilometers and a population of 50 to 60 million, it was the first time in history that the subcontinent was united under a single government. The second emperor of the Maurya Dynasty was the son of Chandragupta, who expanded the empire further but never achieved the same level of notoriety as his own son, Ashoka.

By far the most famous emperor of the Maurya Dynasty, Ahsoka is considered one of the most famous rulers in all of Indian history as well as one of the great Buddhist kings. The decline of the Maurya Dynasty took place somewhat rapidly following the death of Ashoka. Historical theories for this include a succession of weak kings and the division of the Empire in two.

From Hinduism to Buddhism

After the Kalinga war (262–261 BCE), Ashoka converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. He preached non-violence and religious acceptance, and he laid a foundation for social harmony and religious transformation across all of India.

Ashoka also sponsored the propagation of the Buddhist religion into Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and Mediterranean Europe. The conversion of Emperor Ashoka to Buddhism legitimized and popularized the religion much like the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity did.

The Pillars of Ashoka

He is famous for ordering that his edicts be carved into stones and caves around the empire and, later, for ordering that his edicts be carved into large sandstone pillars topped with statues of lions, known as the Pillars of Ashoka. These pillars, often exquisitely decorated, are the most widespread example of Mauryan architecture that exists today, with more than 40 spread throughout the Indian subcontinent. The works from this empire represent the earliest surviving remnants of monumental sculpture .

Pillar of Ashoka at Lumbini: The most widespread example of Mauryan architecture that exists today are the Pillars of Ashoka, which are often exquisitely decorated. There are more than 40 pillars spread throughout the Indian subcontinent.

The Barabar Caves and Other Temples

The Barabar Caves are the earliest example of Buddhist rock-cut architecture and were built during the Mauryan period. Attributed to Emperor Ashoka, the caves consist of temples, stupas, and monasteries that are carved elaborately out of granite. The decorated facade of the Lomas Rishi grotto, an offering to the Buddhist sect of the Ajivikas, is a good example of the high degree of craftsmanship.

Barabar Caves: Built in the third century BCE during the Mauryan period, these are the oldest examples of Buddhist rock-cut architecture.

In addition, Ashoka was responsible for erecting several thousand Buddhist temples and stupas across India, such as the Mahabodhi temple. Another famous example includes the Great Stupas at Sanchi, whose gates are lavishly decorated with lions, elephants,

figures of fertility, and images from the Jakata tales. Ashoka's patronage of the Buddhist religion greatly influenced the visual iconography of time.

Mahabodhi Temple: The Mahabodhi Temple is one of the many temples erected by Ashoka across India.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Civiltu00e0ValleIndoMappa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Civilt%C3%A0ValleIndoMappa.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dancing_Girl_of_Mohenjo-daro.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shiva Pashupati. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shiva_Pashupati.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/New Civilization in the Indus Valley: Harappa. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org's_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/New_Civilization_in_the_Indus_Valley:_Harappa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Category:Indus Valley Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Indus_Valley_Civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient History/Indian subcontinent/Indus Valley Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Ancient_History/Indian_subcontinent/Indus_Valley_Civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indus Valley Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/The Indus River Valley. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org's_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/The_Indus_River_Valley. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/lapis-lazuli. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/steatite. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze Age. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Bronze_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rigveda MS2097. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rigveda_MS2097.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Map of Vedic India. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Vedic_India.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- NavdatoliGoblet1300BCE. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NavdatoliGoblet1300BCE.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Painted Grey Ware. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Painted_Grey_Ware. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Black and Red Ware. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_and_Red_Ware. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vedic period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Upanishad. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanishad. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vedic period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Upanishad. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Upanishad. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vedic Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic%20Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sanskrit. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Sanskrit. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- CotthapAduc. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CotthapAduc.gif. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Barabar Caves 2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barabar_Caves_2.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mahabodhi Temple Bodh Gaya Bihar India. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mahabodhi_Temple_Bodh_Gaya_Bihar_India.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maurya Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurya_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashoka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashoka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mahabodhi Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahabodhi_Temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sanchi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- stupa. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stupa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- dynasty. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 11.1: Early Indus Valley Civilizations is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

11.2: Buddhist Art

Buddhist Stupas

A stupa is a traditional Buddhist monument that houses holy relics associated with the Buddha.

Learning Objectives

Describe the common features, as well as stylistic variations, found in Buddhist stupas

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Stupas evolved over time from simple funerary monuments to elaborately decorated objects of veneration.
- Emperor Ashoka, who ruled from 274–236 BCE during the Maurya Dynasty , is said to have redistributed the relics housed in the original stupas of the Buddha into thousands of stupas throughout India.
- All stupas contain a treasury , a Tree of Life, and small offerings known as Tsa-Tsas. It is believed that the more objects placed into the treasury, the stronger the stupa's energy.
- There are five types of stupas: Relic stupas, Object stupas, Commemorative stupas, Symbolic stupas and Votive stupas. A stupa is thought to bring enlightenment to the one who builds and owns it; it is also considered a placed of worship for many Buddhists.

Key Terms

- **relic**: A part of the body of a saint, or an ancient religious object, kept for veneration.
- **mantra**: A phrase repeated to assist concentration during meditation.

History of Stupas

A stupa, literally meaning heap, is a mound-like structure designed to encase Buddhist relics and other holy objects. Stupas exist all over the world and are the oldest Buddhist religious monuments.

Originally a simple mound of clay or mud, stupas evolved from simple funerary monuments to become elaborately decorated objects of veneration. Legend has it that following the cremation of Buddha, his ashes were divided into eight parts and distributed among various rulers to be enshrined at special burial mounds.

Emperor Ashoka, who ruled from 274–236 BCE during the Maurya Empire, is said to have redistributed the relics housed in the original stupas into thousands of stupas throughout India. Ashoka is also credited with the construction of numerous stupas that remain to this day, including those at Sanchi and Sarnath.

Stupa at Sanchi, India: Emperor Ashoka is credited with construction of numerous stupas that remain to this day, including the stupa at Sanchi.

Structure and Style

While they can vary visually, all stupas have a few features in common. Every stupa contains a treasury filled with various objects —small offerings, or Tsa-Tsas, fill the majority of the treasury, while jewelry and other precious objects are also placed within. It is believed that the more objects placed into the treasury, the stronger the stupa's energy.

The Tree of Life, a wooden pole covered with gems and mantras , is an important element of every stupa and is placed in the stupa's central channel during an initiation ceremony , where participants' most powerful wishes are stored.

There are five types of stupas:

1. Relic stupas, in which the relics of Buddha and other religious persons are buried.
2. Object stupas, in which the objects belonging to Buddha or his disciples are buried.
3. Commemorative stupas, built to commemorate events in the life of Buddha and his disciples.
4. Symbolic stupas, built to symbolize various aspects of Buddhist theology.
5. Votive stupas, constructed to commemorate visits or gain spiritual benefits.

In the Buddhist religion, it is believed that a stupa brings enlightenment to the one who builds and owns it. In addition, the stupa is considered a place of worship, and many Buddhists complete pilgrimages to significant stupas.

Buddhist Architecture and Sculpture

Sri Lankan art and architecture were deeply influenced by Buddhism, which was introduced to the island in the third century BCE.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the evolution of Buddhist art in Sri Lanka, from early cave temples to the art and architecture of the kingdom of Anuradhapura

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Three types of structures are typically associated with the religious architecture of early Buddhism : monasteries (viharas), places to venerate relics (stupas), and shrines or prayer halls (chaityas or chaitya grihas). The earliest examples of Buddhist architecture found in Sri Lanka are cave temples. The most famous of these, the Dambulla temple complex, dates to the 1st century BCE.
- The kingdom of Anuradhapura (377 BCE–1017 CE), named for its capital city, produced some the finest ancient Sri Lankan art and architecture.
- Sri Lankan stupas were among the largest brick structures known to the premodern world. Intended to enshrine relics of the Buddha, they were built in various shapes and often accompanied by a vahalkada, or decorative frontispiece.
- Another architectural creation associated with stupas and unique to ancient Sri Lankan architecture was the vatadage , a circular Buddhist structure built around small stupas.
- The rock fortress and palace complex of Sigiriya is particularly renowned for its ancient frescoes of female figures bearing flowers; it dates from the fifth century and is painted in a very distinctive style .
- Sculpture was also a notable art form , and many fine statues of the Buddha were produced during the Anuradhapura period. The fourth-century Samadhi statue in Anuradhapura is considered one of the finest examples of ancient Sri Lankan sculpture.

Key Terms

- **vatadage**: A decorative circular frontispiece near the entrance of a Sri Lankan stupa.
- **stupa**: A dome-shaped Buddhist monument, used to house Buddhist relics.

Overview: Buddhist Architecture

Buddhist religious architecture developed in the Indian Subcontinent in the third century BCE. Three types of structures are typically associated with the religious architecture of early Buddhism:

1. Monasteries (viharas).
2. Places to venerate relics (stupas).
3. Shrines or prayer halls (chaityas or chaitya grihas), which later came to be called temples in some places.

Viharas were initially only temporary shelters used by wandering monks during the rainy season, but they later developed to accommodate the growing trend towards Buddhist monasticism. A distinctive type of fortress architecture found in the former and present Buddhist kingdoms of the Himalayas is known as dzongs.

The initial function of the stupa was the veneration and safe-guarding of the relics of the Buddha. The earliest surviving example of a stupa is in Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh).

In accordance with changes in religious practice, stupas were gradually incorporated into chaitya-grihas. These reached their high point in the 1st century BCE, exemplified by the cave complexes of Ajanta and Ellora (Maharashtra). The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya in Bihar is another well-known example.

Buddhist Architecture in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan art and architecture was deeply influenced by Buddhism, which was introduced to the island in the third century BCE by the son of Ashoka, Mahinda. Ashoka, the great Buddhist emperor of the Maurya Dynasty , dedicated himself to the propagation of the religion across Asia. Sri Lanka has the longest continuous history of Buddhism of any Buddhist nation, and its culture reflects its religious tradition.

Cave Temples

The earliest examples of Buddhist architecture found in Sri Lanka are cave temples. The most famous of these, the Dambulla temple complex, dates back to the first century BCE. This complex consists of five caves and is decorated inside with statues and frescoes of the Buddha and various gods and goddesses from the Buddhist pantheon .

Sri Lankan Stupas

The kingdom of Anuradhapura (377 BCE to 1017 CE), named for its capital city, produced some of the finest ancient Sri Lankan art and architecture. Some of the most distinctive and famous Sri Lankan monuments were built during this period, including a large number of dagobas or stupas, for which the island is renowned.

Sri Lankan stupas were among the largest brick structures known to the premodern world. Intended to enshrine relics of the Buddha, they were built in various shapes, including the bubble, the pot, and the bell. The Sri Lankan stupa is characterized by its vahalkada, or frontispiece. It is a structure, often ornately carved, that joins the stupa and often uses cardinal directions as a decorative flourish.

One of the most famous stupas in Sri Lanka is the Jetavanaramaya stupa, which was built during the 3rd and 4th centuries CE in the sacred city of Anuradhapura; it is believed to house a part of a sash of the Buddha. Built from baked bricks bound with limestone , sand, and clay and coated with lime plaster, this stupa stands at 400 feet and was the tallest stupa in the ancient world.

The Vatadage

Another architectural creation associated with stupas and unique to ancient Sri Lankan architecture was the Vatadage, a circular Buddhist structure built around small stupas. These were usually made of stone and brick and elaborately carved. They may have also had wooden roofs that were supported by stone columns arranged in concentric rows.

Polonnaruwa Vatadage: A vatadage in the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka, from the 12th century CE.

Sigiriya

Another famous monument erected under the patronage of Anuradhapura was the rock fortress and palace complex of Sigiriya. Sigirya is particularly renowned for its ancient frescoes, which date from the 5th century and were painted in a very distinctive style.

The lines are painted in a manner that enhances the sense of volume of the figures, and the paint is applied in sweeping strokes, using more pressure on one side than the other and giving the effect of a deeper tone toward the edges. The frescoes all depict beautiful female figures who are carrying flowers and are hypothesized to be apsaras (celestial nymphs), ladies of the king's court, or women taking part in religious rituals .

Sigiriya fresco: Depicting women with flowers, the Sigiriya frescoes are examples of a distinctive Sri Lankan school of painting from the 5th century CE.

Buddhist Sculpture

Sculpture was also a notable art form, and many fine statues of the Buddha were produced during the Anuradhapura period in Sri Lanka. The Samadhi statue in Anuradhapura is considered one of the finest examples of ancient Sri Lankan sculpture. Sculpted from dolomite marble, it dates to the 4th century CE and shows the Buddha seated in a position of deep meditation.

Samadhi Statue: Located in Anuradhapura, this statue dates to the fourth century CE and is a fine example of ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist sculpture.

Buddhist Rock-Cut Architecture

Rock-cut architecture is the practice of creating a structure by carving it out of solid natural rock.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish the features of the Ajanta, Barabar, and Ellora caves of India

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Buddhist rock-cut temples and structures were often located near trade routes and became stopovers and lodging houses for traders. Their interiors became more and more elaborate as their endowments grew.
- A notable trait of rock-cut architecture is the crafting of rock to imitate timbered and carved wood.
- Cave temples have been well-preserved due to their hidden locations and the fact that they are constructed from stone, a far more durable material than wood, clay, or metal.
- The Barabar caves in Bihar, built in the third century BCE and credited to Emperor Ashoka, are the oldest example of Buddhist rock-cut architecture.
- The Ajanta caves contain some very well-preserved tempera wall paintings that illustrate the Jataka and date from the second century BCE.
- The Ellora caves are made up of twelve Buddhist, seventeen Hindu, and five Jain rock-cut temples, excavated out of the Charanandri hills. Similar to the Barabar and Ajanta caves, they contain many frescoes , reliefs , and shrines.

Key Terms

- **cornice**: The topmost architectural element of a building that projects forward from the main walls and was originally used to direct rainwater away from the building's walls.
- **tempera**: A medium used to bind pigments in painting, as well as the associated artistic techniques.
- **pilaster**: A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached, giving the appearance of a support but used only for decoration.

Overview: Rock-Cut Architecture

Rock-cut architecture is the practice of creating a structure by carving it out of solid natural rock. In India, the term cave is often applied in reference to rock-cut architecture; however, it must be distinguished from a naturally occurring cave, as rock-cut architecture is a highly engineered and elaborately decorated structure.

There are more than 1,500 rock-cut temples in India, most of which are religious in nature, adorned with decorative paintings and exquisite stone carvings that reflect a very high level of craftsmanship.

Buddhist rock-cut temples and monasteries were often located near trade routes and these spaces became stopovers and lodging houses for traders. As their endowments grew, the interiors of rock-cut temples became more and more elaborate and decorated.

While many temples, monasteries, and stupas have been destroyed, cave temples are better preserved due to their hidden locations and the fact that they are constructed from stone, a far more durable material than wood, clay, or metal.

India's Rock-Cut Architecture

The Barabar Caves

In India, caves have long been regarded as sacred spaces and were enlarged or entirely man-made for use as temples and monasteries by Buddhist monks and ascetics. The Barabar caves in Bihar, built in the third century BCE during the Mauryan period, are the oldest examples of Buddhist rock-cut architecture.

Credited to Emperor Ashoka, these caves mostly consist of two rooms carved entirely out of granite. The first room, a large rectangular hall, was meant to be a space for worshipers to congregate, while the second room was a small, domed chamber for worship. This second chamber is thought to have contained small, stupa-like structures, though it is empty now.

The Ajanta Caves

The Ajanta caves in Maharashtra are a group of 30 rock-cut Buddhist temples that span six centuries, beginning in the first century BCE. They are carved into the vertical side of a gorge located in the hills of the Sahyadri mountains.

The Ajanta caves are considered masterpieces of Buddhist architecture and contain living and sleeping quarters, kitchens, monastic spaces, shrines, and stupas. Made of brick or excavated from stone, the residences of monks are called viharas, while the cave shrines used for worship are called chaitya grihas.

Similar to the Barabar caves, the Ajanta caves are situated close to main trade routes. A great deal of decorative sculpture—intricately carved columns and reliefs, including cornices and pilaster—are found here.

A notable trait of rock-cut architecture is the crafting of rock to imitate timbered and carved wood. The Ajanta caves are home to some very early and well-preserved wall paintings that decorate the walls and ceilings and date from the second century BCE.

Executed using tempera technique on smooth surfaces and prepared by the application of plaster, the themes of the paintings are Buddhist and gracefully illustrate the major events of Buddha's life, the Jataka tales , and the various divinities of the Buddhist pantheon .

Ajanta Cave: A great deal of decorative sculptures—intricately carved columns and reliefs, including cornices and pilaster—are found in the Ajanta caves.

The Ellora Caves

The Ellora caves were built between the fifth and tenth centuries. These caves are made up of twelve Buddhist, seventeen Hindu, and five Jain rock-cut temples, excavated out of the Charanandri hills.

The proximity of the temples that belong to different religions demonstrates the religious harmony of the time. Similar to the Barabar and Ajanta caves, the Ellora caves contain many frescoes, reliefs, and shrines, including carvings of the Buddha, bodhisattvas , and saints. In many cases the stone is intricately carved to look like wood.

Ellora Cave: Similar to the Barabar and Ajanta caves, the Ellora caves contain many frescoes, reliefs, and shrines, including carvings of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and saints.

Buddhist Wall Paintings

Buddhist wall paintings can be traced back to the Gupta period and are one of the dominant art forms of the early medieval period in India.

Learning Objectives

Describe the cave murals, rock-cut monasteries, and miniature paintings created during India's early Medieval period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The period of Gupta rule is known as the Golden Age of India, as it was a time marked by peace, prosperity, and the flourishing of the arts, as seen in the cave paintings at Ajanta.
- Medieval India was a time marked by the appearance of a multitude of states and dynasties that were often in conflict with one another. The Islamic invasions began as early as the 8th century, and by the early 12th century, almost all of northern India was conquered.
- The dynasties of Medieval India were predominantly Hindu, though some were Jaina and only a very few were Buddhist.
- Murals continued to flourish during the early medieval period, mainly in caves or rock-cut temples and monasteries, such as the caves of Ellora, Bagh, and Sittanavasal.
- Miniature painting began in the early medieval period as illustrations on palm-leaf manuscripts, painted on the leaves (about 2.25 by 3 inches) and wooden covers of Hindu, Jaina, and Buddhist texts.

Key Terms

- **fresco**: In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to wet or fresh lime mortar or plaster.
- **album leaves**: Types of paintings that were popular among the gentry and scholar-officials of the Southern Song Dynasty.

The Gupta Empire

The Gupta Empire was an ancient Indian empire that covered much of the Indian subcontinent and was run by the Gupta Dynasty from approximately 320 to 550 CE. After the fall of the Mauryan Empire in the 2nd century BCE, India remained divided in a number of disparate kingdoms.

During the late 3rd century CE, the Gupta family gained control of the kingship of Magadha (modern-day eastern India and Bengal). The period of Gupta rule is known as the Golden Age of India, as it was a time marked by unprecedented prosperity and

the flourishing of the arts and sciences in India.

Art in the Gupta Empire

The rulers of the Gupta Empire were staunch supporters of the arts, science, literature, and architecture. In addition to patronizing the art of the Hindu religion, which the majority of the rulers subscribed to, the Guptas were known also for their support of Buddhist and Jain art and culture . In particular, Gupta period Buddhist art was quite influential in most of East and Southeast Asia.

The Ajanta caves are a Buddhist rock-cut structure dating from the 2nd century BCE to 600 CE that contain wall paintings created during the Gupta period. The paintings depict the Jataka tales and are considered to be masterpieces of Buddhist religious art . In addition, the Gupta Empire supported the Buddhist Universities of Nalanda and Vikramasila.

Ajanta cave painting: A wall painting from the Ajanta caves, painted during the Gupta dynasty, circa 6th century CE.

Medieval India

The Gupta Empire quickly declined under the successors of Chandragupta II. In the year 480 CE, the Huns—nomadic-pastoralist warriors from the Eurasian steppe—launched an invasion of India, and by the year 500 CE, they overran the Gupta Empire. Though the Huns were eventually driven out of India, the Gupta Empire would never recover.

The disintegration of the Gupta Empire towards the end of the 5th and 6th centuries triggered what is known as the medieval period in India (c. 8th–13th centuries CE). This period was marked by the appearance of a multitude of states and dynasties that were often in conflict with one another.

The dynasties of Medieval India were predominantly Hindu, though some were Jain, and a very few were Buddhist. The Islamic invasions of India began as early as the 8th century, and by the early 12th century almost all of northern India was conquered.

The Hindu kingdoms of medieval India fell easily to the Islamic invaders, and soon the majority of India was under varying degrees of Islamic control. The impact of Islam on Indian art was initially quite destructive, but it eventually resulted in a synthesis of styles and the development of new and important works of art.

Cave Murals

The Ellora caves consist of 34 rock-cut temples and monasteries belonging to the Buddhist, Hindu, and Jaina faiths, built between the 5th and 10th centuries. The majority of the earlier caves were Buddhist, while caves constructed in the 9th and 10th centuries were Hindu and Jain.

The caves contain many different elaborately carved rooms as well as figures of gods, stupas , and decorative work that are all carved in stone. Frescoes on the walls and ceilings of both the Ajanta and Ellora caves are believed to date from the early medieval period, between the 8th and 10th centuries, and illustrate various Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain themes.

Ajanta cave painting: An example of a painting from one of the Ajanta caves.

Sittanavasal

Sittanavasal dates from the 2nd century and is the most famous of the Jain rock-cut monasteries. It contains remnants of beautiful frescoes believed to be from the 7th to 9th centuries. Again, the themes of the frescoes are religious and generally employ a palette consisting of black, green, yellow, orange, blue, and white.

In addition to wall murals, there are paintings on the ceiling of Sittanavasal from the 9th century that depict elephants, buffalo, fish, geese, dancing girls, and lotus flowers. These frescoes, along with those of the Ajanta caves and Bagh, are considered to be the high point of Medieval Indian art.

A painting from Sittanavasal: Sittanavasal contains remnants of beautiful frescoes believed to be from the 7th to 9th centuries.

Miniature Painting

Miniature painting is believed to have started in the eastern part of medieval India, as exemplified by illustrations on palm-leaf religious manuscripts that are painted on the leaves and wooden covers of the manuscripts. Some of the most common Buddhist illustrated manuscripts include the Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita, the Pancharaksa, the Karandavyuha, and the Kalachakrayanatantra.

Detail of an illuminated manuscript: The detail on this piece of artwork was created circa 700–1100 CE.

Miniature painting is thought to have developed slightly later in western India, somewhere between the 10th and 12th centuries, and it generally exists with Hindu and Jain texts.

Human figures are seen predominantly from a profile view, with large eyes, pointy noses, and slim waists. The color palette often employs black, red, white, brown, blue, and yellow.

While it is believed that miniature painting came into existence during the medieval period, it was to flourish extensively from the 16th to 19th centuries during the Mughal empire .

Greco-Buddhist Art

The art styles of Gandhāra and Mathura are noted for their distinctive style of Buddhist art influenced by Greek culture.

Learning Objectives

Give examples of the Greek influence on the Buddhist Gadhara style of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Gandhāra is the name of an ancient kingdom located in parts of modern-day northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan that lasted from the early first millennium BCE to the 11th century CE.
- The Gandhāran art style flourished and achieved its peak during the Kushan period, from the 1st to the 5th century. It declined and suffered destruction after the invasion of the White Huns in the 5th century.
- Gandhāra is noted for its distinctive style of Buddhist art, which developed out of a merger of Greek, Syrian, Persian, and Indian artistic influences. Gandhāran Buddhist sculpture displays a Greek artistic influence that contributes to depictions of wavy hair, drapery covering both shoulders, shoes, and sandals.
- Stucco was widely used by sculptors in Gandhāra for the decoration of monastic and cult buildings; it provided the artist with a medium of great plasticity and enabled a high degree of expressiveness to be given to the sculpture.
- Although based on a strong Indian tradition, the art of Mathura also incorporated elements of the Hellenistic tradition, such as a general idealistic realism , and key design elements, such as curly hair and folded garments.
- The Mathura and Gandhāra art styles strongly influenced each other, and it is still a matter of debate whether the anthropomorphic representations of Buddha were essentially a result of a local evolution of Buddhist art at Mathura or a consequence of Greek cultural influence in Gandhāra.

Key Terms

- **stucco**: A plaster that is used to coat interior or exterior walls or used for moldings.

Overview: Gandhāra and Mathura

In ancient art, anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha started to emerge from the 1st century CE in Northern India. The two main centers of creation have been identified as Gandhāra in today's North West Frontier Province in Pakistan, and the region of Mathura in central northern India.

Gandhāran Art

Introduction

Gandhāra is the name of an ancient kingdom located in parts of modern-day northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, mainly in the Peshawar Valley, the Pothohar Plateau, and the Kabul River Valley. The Kingdom of Gandhāra lasted from the early first millennium BCE to the 11th century CE.

The art style of the Kingdom flourished and achieved its peak during the Kushan period, from the 1st to the 5th centuries; it then declined and suffered destruction after the invasion of the White Huns in the 5th century.

Style

Gandhāra is noted for its distinctive style of Buddhist art, which developed out of a merger of Greek, Syrian, Persian, and Indian artistic influences. This development began during the Parthian Period (50 BCE–CE 75).

The art of Gandhāra benefited from centuries of interaction with Greek culture after the conquests of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE and the subsequent establishment of the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Kingdoms, which led to the development of Greco-Buddhist art.

In Gandhāran art, the Buddha is often shown under the protection of the Greek god Herakles, standing with his club (and later a diamond rod) resting over his arm. This unusual representation of Herakles is the same as the one seen only on the back of of Demetrius's coins, and it is exclusively associated to him (and his son Euthydemus II).

Gandhāran Buddhist sculpture displays Greek artistic influence, and it has been suggested that the concept of the man-god was essentially inspired by Greek mythological culture. Artistically, the Gandhāran School of sculpture is said to have contributed wavy hair, drapery covering both shoulders, shoes, sandals, and acanthus leaf decorations.

Buddha Herakles: The Buddha and Vajrapani under the guise of Herakles.

Stone was widely used by sculptors in Gandhāra for the decoration of monastic and cult buildings, and stucco provided the artist with a medium of great plasticity, enabling a high degree of expressiveness to be given to the sculpture. Sculpting in stucco was popular wherever Buddhism spread from Gandhāra: India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and China.

Mathura Style

Introduction

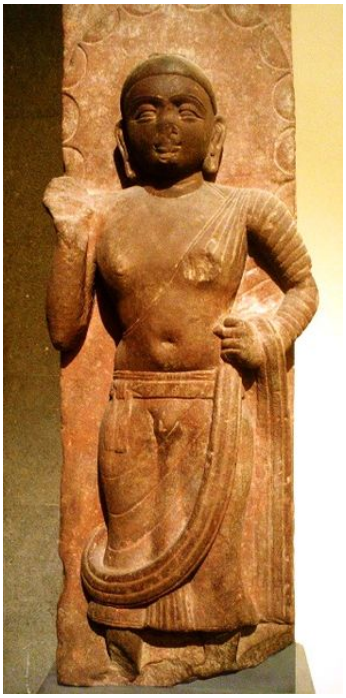
Mathura is a city in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The art of Mathura tends to be based on a strong Indian tradition, exemplified by the anthropomorphic representation of divinities such as the Yaksas, although in a style rather archaic compared to the later representations of the Buddha.

The Mathuran school contributed to many new styles in art such as clothes of thin muslin that only cover the left shoulder, the wheel on the palm, and the lotus seat.

Art of Mathura

The representations of the Buddha in Mathura are generally dated slightly later than those of Gandhāra (although not without debate) and are also much less numerous. Mathura sculptures incorporate many Hellenistic elements, such as a general idealistic realism, and key design elements, such as curly hair and folded garments.

Specific Mathuran adaptations tend to reflect warmer climatic conditions, as they consist in a higher fluidity of the clothing, which progressively tends to cover only one shoulder instead of both. The art of Mathura also features frequent sexual imagery: female images with bare breasts or nude below the waist, displaying labia and female genitalia, are common, making these images more sexually explicit than those of earlier or later periods.



Mathura Buddha: The representations of the Buddha in Mathura are generally dated slightly later than those of Gandhāra (although not without debate) and are also much less numerous.

Relationship to Gandhāra Style

The Mathura and Gandhāra styles strongly influenced each other. During their artistic florescence, the two regions were united politically under the Kushans, both being capitals of the empire. It is still a matter of debate whether the anthropomorphic representations of Buddha were essentially a result of a local evolution of Buddhist art at Mathura, or a consequence of Greek cultural influence in Gandhāra through the Greco-Buddhist syncretism .

This iconic art was characterized from the start by a realistic idealism that combined realistic human features, proportions, attitudes, and attributes, together with a sense of perfection and serenity reaching to the divine. This expression of the Buddha as both man and God became the iconographic canon for subsequent Buddhist art.

Influences and Legacy

Hindu art began to develop from the 1st to the 2nd century CE and found its first inspiration in the Buddhist art of Mathura. It progressively incorporated a profusion of original Hindu stylistic and symbolic elements, in contrast with the general balance and simplicity of Buddhist art.

The art of Mathura acquired progressively more Indian elements and reached a very high sophistication during the Gupta Empire between the 4th and the 6th century CE. The art of the Gupta Period is considered the pinnacle of Indian Buddhist art.

Gupta Buddha: A statue of Buddha from the Gupta Period, Musée Guimet, Paris.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Sanchi stupa. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sanchi_stupa.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stupa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stupa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mantra. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mantra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- SamadhiStatue. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:SamadhiStatue.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sigiri Frescos. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sigiri_Frescos.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vatadage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vatadage.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buddhist Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Sri Lanka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Sri_Lanka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dances of Sri Lanka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dances_of_Sri_Lanka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of ancient Sri Lanka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_ancient_Sri_Lanka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Music of Sri Lanka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Sri_Lanka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Sri Lanka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Sri_Lanka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sigiriya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigiriya. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vatadage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/vatadage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- stupa. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stupa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- AJANTA CAVES - C.SHELARE (1). **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AJANTA_CAVES_-_C.SHELARE_(1).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ellora Caves, Picture 4. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ellora_Caves,_Picture_4.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rock-cut architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock-cut_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ellora Caves. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellora_Caves. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- List of rock-cut temples in India. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rock-cut_temples_in_India. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vihara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vihara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indian rock-cut architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_rock-cut_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barabar Caves. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barabar_Caves. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- cornice. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cornice. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pilaster. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pilaster. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tempera. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tempera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ajanta Cave Painting. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ajanta_Cave_Painting.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Nalanda. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Astasahasrika_Prajnaparamita_Avalokitesvara_Bodhisattva_Nalanda.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- er-des-6.-jahrhunderts-001.%402x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indischer_Maler_des_6._Jahrhunderts_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Samanar Padukkai. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samanar_Padukkai.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/album-leaves. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gupta and Post-Gupta. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/307859/textbooks/painting-1-8adf00aa-c11d-45a0-864a-1de2e11ad1f5/art-of-south-and-southeast-asia-before-1200-south-and-southeast-asia-after-1200-17/the-shungas-and-early-andhras-156/gupta-and-post-gupta-621-10499/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Perfection of Wisdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfection_of_Wisdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sittanavasal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sittanavasal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cave paintings in India. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_paintings_in_India. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indian painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_painting%23Malwa.2C_Deccan_and_Jaunpur_schools_of_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddha-Herakles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Buddha-Herakles.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 315px-guptabuddha.%402x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:GuptaBuddha.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 296px-mathurabuddha.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MathuraBuddha.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mathura Style. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/307859/textbooks/painting-1-8adf00aa-c11d-45a0-864a-1de2e11ad1f5/art-of-south-and-southeast-asia-before-1200-south-and-southeast-asia-after-1200-17/kushan-and-

later-andhra-periods-157/mathura-style-624-5351/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- Greco-Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gandhara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gandhara%23Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- gandhara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/gandhara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- stucco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stucco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Style (visual arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Style_(visual_arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 11.2: Buddhist Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

11.3: Java and Cambodia

The Java Culture

The art of Java is the result of a complex cultural mixture that is very different from the original indigenous cultures.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Wayang puppet shows, gamelan music, and silat martial art of Java

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The culture of Indonesia has been shaped by its long interactions between original indigenous customs and multiple foreign influences.
- Wayang is a Javanese word for particular kinds of shadow puppet theater. Performances of shadow puppet theater are accompanied by a gamelan orchestra in Java.
- Gamelan is a traditional musical ensemble from Indonesia featuring a variety of instruments such as metallophones, xylophones, kendang (drums), gongs, bamboo flutes, and bowed and plucked strings.
- The martial art of silat was created and first developed in the islands of Java and Sumatra; it is an art for survival and practiced throughout Indonesian archipelago .
- Java culture is known for its advances in blacksmithing and wood carving for both tools and cultural objects.
- Architecture in Java is notable for its trapezoidal roof patterns and pendopo, or pavilions with open sides and four large pillars .

Key Terms

- **wayang**: An Indonesian puppet or shadow puppet, or the theater of such puppetry.
- **gamelan**: A genre of music of Indonesian origin that typically features metallophones, xylophones, drums, gongs, and bamboo flute.

Introduction: The Culture of Java

The culture of the Javanese ethnic group in Indonesia is entered in the Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java provinces. Due to various migrations, it can also be found in other parts of the world, such as Suriname (where 15% of the population are of Javanese descent), the broader Indonesian archipelago region, Cape Malay, Malaysia, Singapore, Netherlands, and other countries.

The culture of Java has been shaped by its long interactions between original indigenous customs and multiple foreign influences. Indonesia is centrally located along ancient trading routes between the Far East and the Middle East; as a result, many cultural practices are strongly influenced by a multitude of local religions. These include Hinduism , Buddhism , Confucianism , Islam , and Christianity, all of which are strong in the major trading cities. The result is a complex cultural mixture that is very different from the original indigenous cultures.

A cultural mingling occurred in the southwestern part of Central Java and brought together Javanese culture and Sundanese culture to create the Banyumasan culture. This area was also named the Banyumasan region.

In the central Javanese court cities of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, contemporary kings trace their lineages back to the pre-colonial Islamic kingdoms that ruled the region, making those places especially strong repositories of classical Javanese culture. The classic arts of Java include wayang puppet shows, gamelan music, and the martial art silat.

Java Art

Wayang Theater

Wayang is a Javanese word for a theatrical performance with puppets or human dancers. The term wayang is the Javanese word for shadow; in modern daily Javanese and Indonesian vocabulary, wayang is most often associated with the puppet itself or the whole puppet theater performance.

Performances of shadow puppet theatre are accompanied by a gamelan orchestra in Java (a musical ensemble made up of mostly percussion instruments).

Wayang performance: The Wayang Kulit performance by an Indonesian famous dalang (puppet master) Ki Manteb Sudharsono, with the story Gathutkaca Winisuda.

Wayang kulit, or shadow puppets, are without a doubt the best known of the Indonesian wayang. Kulit means skin and refers to the leather construction of the puppets that are carefully chiseled with very fine tools and supported with carefully shaped buffalo horn handles and control rods. The handwork involved in making a wayang kulit figure that is suitable for a performance takes several weeks, with the artists working together in groups.

The stories are usually drawn from the Hindu epics, such as the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, or from the Serat Menak (a story about the heroism of Amir Hamza). Historically, the performance consisted of shadows cast on a cotton screen and an oil lamp. Today, the source of light used in wayang performance in Java is most often a halogen electric light.

Music

A gamelan is a traditional musical ensemble from Indonesia, typically from the islands of Java and Bali, that features a variety of instruments such as metallophones, xylophones, kendang (drums), gongs, bamboo flutes, and bowed and plucked strings. Vocalists may also be included.

For most Indonesians, gamelan music is an integral part of Indonesian culture. The term refers more to the set of instruments rather than to the players of those instruments. A gamelan is a set of instruments as a distinct entity, built and tuned to stay together, and instruments from different gamelan are generally not interchangeable.

Javanese gamelan: A Javanese gamelan ensemble performance during a traditional Javanese Yogyakarta-style wedding ceremony.

In Javanese mythology, the gamelan was created by Sang Hyang Guru in the Saka era 167 (c. CE 230). He is considered the god who ruled as king of all Java from a palace on the Maendra mountain in Medang Kamulan (now Mount Lawu). He needed a signal to summon the gods and thus invented the gong. For more complex messages, he invented two other gongs, thus forming the original gamelan set.

Variations of gamelan ensembles are distinguished by their collection of instruments and their use of voice, tunings, repertoire, style , and cultural context. In general, no two gamelan ensembles are the same, and those that arose in prestigious courts are often considered to have their own style. Certain styles may also be shared by nearby ensembles, leading to a regional style.

Silat

Silat is a class of indigenous martial arts from the area of Southeast Asia encompassing most of the Nusantara, the Indonesian Archipelago, the Malay Archipelago, and the entirety of the Malay Peninsula. The art of silat was created and first developed in the islands of Java and Sumatra. It is an art for survival shaped by centuries of tribal wars in Indonesian history.

Silat was used to determine rank and social position in old Indonesian kingdoms; it was also used by Indonesian freedom fighters during their struggle against Dutch colonists. Unfortunately, after Indonesia achieved its independence, silat became less popular among Indonesian youth compared to foreign martial arts like karate and tae kwon do.

Silat Minangkabaut: Silat Minangkabaut, a particular form of silat.

Blacksmithing and Wood Carving

For the Javanese, blacksmiths are traditionally valued. Javanese blacksmiths provide a range of tools, such as farming equipment and fire-arms, and cultural items, such as gamelan instruments.

The kris is an asymmetrical dagger with a distinctive blade pattern achieved through alternating laminations of iron and nickelous iron; many heirloom kris made by master blacksmiths in Java hold significant historical value . The Javanese art of wood carving is traditionally applied to various cultural attributes such as statues, wayang dolls, and masks.

Kris and other weapons: The kris is an asymmetrical dagger noted for its distinctive wavy blade patterning.

Architecture

Throughout their long history, the Javanese have produced many important buildings, ranging from Hindu monuments, Buddhist stupa , mortuary temples, palace complexes, and mosques . The paragon of religious monuments are the Hindu temple of Prambanan and the Buddhist temple of Borobudur, both were built in the 9th century near the city of Yogyakarta.

An example of secular architecture can be seen in ruins of the former capital city of the Majapahit Kingdom (which ruled from the 14th to 16th century CE) in Trowulan, East Java. The complex consists of various brick buildings, purification pools, temples, and iconic split gates.

Traditional Javanese buildings can be identified by their trapezoidal roofs that are supported by wooden pillars. Another common feature in Javanese buildings is the pendopo, a pavilion with open sides and four large pillars. The pillars and other parts of the buildings are often richly carved.

Traditional mosques in Java maintain a distinctive Javanese style with both the pendopo and a trapezoidal roof, rather than the more typical dome and minarets . The roofs are often multitiered and tiled. The split gate from an earlier Hindu-Buddhist period is still used in many mosques and public buildings in Java. Some notable examples of mosques that use traditional Javanese architecture include the mosques at Agung Demak, Menara Kudus, and Banten.

Cambodian Art

Throughout Cambodia’s long history, religion has been a major source of cultural inspiration for art, dance, and music.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Hindu and Buddhist influences on Cambodian dance and music

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Over nearly two millennia, Cambodians have developed a unique Khmer belief system from the syncreticism of indigenous animistic beliefs and the Indian religions of Buddhism and Hinduism .

- The history of Cambodian art stretches back centuries to ancient times, but the most famous period is undoubtedly the Khmer art of the Khmer Empire (802–1431).
- The 12th century temple complex of Angkor Wat , located amidst other sites in the area around Angkor, is perhaps the most famous example of Cambodian architecture.
- Traditional Cambodian arts and crafts include textiles, non-textile weaving, silversmithing, stone carving, lacquerware , ceramics , wat murals, and kite-making.
- Dance in Cambodia consists of three main categories: classical dance of the royal court used for invocation, for entertainment, and to pay homage; folk dance portraying cultural traditions; and social dances performed in social gatherings.
- Cambodian music is highly influenced by ancient forms as well as Hindu forms.

Key Terms

- **Khmer**: The predominant ethnic group in Cambodia, accounting for approximately 90% of the 15.2 million people in the country.

Introduction: Cambodia

Throughout Cambodia's long history, religion has been a major source of cultural inspiration. Over nearly two thousand years, Cambodians have developed a unique Khmer belief from the syncreticism of indigenous animistic beliefs and the Indian religions of Buddhism and Hinduism.

Indian culture and civilization , including its languages and arts, reached mainland Southeast Asia around the first century CE; it is generally believed that seafaring merchants brought Indian customs and culture to the ports along the Gulf of Thailand and the Pacific en route to trade with China. The Kingdom of Funan was most probably the first Khmer state to benefit from this influx of Indian ideas.

Art in Cambodia

Architecture

The history of Cambodian art stretches back centuries to ancient times, but the most famous period is undoubtedly the Khmer art of the Khmer Empire (802–1431). The 12th century temple complex of Angkor Wat, located amidst other sites in the area around Angkor, it perhaps the most famous example of Cambodian architecture. After the collapse of the Khmer Empire, this and other sites were abandoned and overgrown, allowing much of the era's stone carving and architecture to survive to the present day.

Angkor Wat was originally constructed as a Hindu temple of the god Vishnu for the Khmer Empire, and gradually transformed into a Buddhist temple toward the end of the 12th century. The temple combines the two basic plans of Khmer temple architecture: the temple-mountain and the later galleried temple.

It is designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the devas in Hindu mythology. There are three rectangular galleries, each raised above the next, within a moat and an outer wall 2.2 miles long. At the center of the temple stands a group of towers.

Unlike most Angkorian temples, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west; scholars are divided as to the significance of this. The temple is admired for the grandeur and harmony of its architecture, its extensive bas-reliefs , and the numerous devatas, or Hindu deities , adorning its walls.

Angkor Wat: A frontal view of the main complex of Angkor Wat.

Traditional Arts

In pre-colonial Cambodia, arts and crafts were generally produced either by rural non-specialists for practical use or by skilled artists producing works for the Royal Palace. Cambodia's best-known stone carving adorns the temples of Angkor.

Silk weaving has a long history—the practice dates back as early as the 1st century, and textiles were often used in trade during Angkorian times. Many Cambodian farmers would weave baskets out of thinly cut bamboo for household use or to sell as a supplemental source of income.

Lacquerware

The height of Cambodian traditional lacquerware was between the 12th and 16th centuries; some examples of work from this era, including gilded Buddha images and betel boxes, have survived to the present day.

Lacquerware was traditionally colored black using burnt wood to represent the underworld; red using mercury to represent the earth; and yellow using arsenic to represent the heavens. Lacquer on Angkorian stone dates to the 15th or 16th century.

Silversmithing

Silversmithing in Cambodia also dates back centuries, and the Royal Palace traditionally patronized silversmiths' workshops. Silver was made into a variety of items, including weaponry, coins, ceremonial objects used in funerary and religious rituals , and betel boxes. During Cambodia's colonial period, artisans at the School of Fine Art produced celebrated silverwork, and by the late 1930s there were more than 600 silversmiths.

Pottery

Cambodian pottery traditions date to 5000 BCE. Ceramics were mostly used for domestic purposes, such as holding food and water, and for figures such as birds, elephants, rabbits, and other animals that were popular between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Cambodia's kite-making and kite-flying tradition, which dates back many centuries, was revived in the early 1990s and is now extremely popular throughout the country. Kites are generally flown at night during the northeast monsoon season; a bow attached to the kites resonates in the wind, producing a musical sound.

Beginning in the mid-20th century, a tradition of modern art began in Cambodia, though in the later 20th century both traditional and modern arts declined for several reasons, including the killing of artists by the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. The country has experienced a recent artistic revival due to increased support from governments, NGOs, and foreign tourists.

Dance

Dance in Cambodia consists of three main categories:

1. Classical dance of the royal court used for invocation, for entertainment, and to pay homage.
2. Folk dance that portrays cultural traditions.
3. Social dances performed in social gatherings.

Cambodia's premiere performing art form is the Khmer classical dance, or Robam Preah Reach Trop. It is a highly stylized dance form originating from the royal courts. Performances of classical dance consist of elaborately costumed dancers and music played by a pinpeat ensemble . It is performed for invocation of deities and spirits as well as to pay homage to royalty and guests.

Khmer dancer: Lady dancer in Siem Reap.

In the mid-20th century, it was introduced to the general public and became widely celebrated as iconic of Cambodian culture. It was often performed during public events, holidays, and for tourists visiting Cambodia. Two of the most performed classical dances are the Robam Chun Por (Wishing dance) and the Robam Tep Apsara (Apsara dance).

Music

Modern music in Cambodia is derived from traditions that date back to the ancient Khmer Empire and from the rapid Westernization of its popular music scene in modern times.

Cambodian pop music, or modern music, is divided into two categories:

1. Ramvong, a slow dance music.
2. Ramkbach, which is closely related to Thai folk music.

In the Siem Reap province, a form of music called kantrum has become popular; it originated among the Khmer Surin in Thailand. Kantrum is famous for Thai and Cambodian stars like Darkie.

Cambodian Art music is highly influenced by its ancient forms as well as Hindu forms. Religious dances, many of which depict stories and ancient myths, are common.

Royal Ballet of Cambodia: The Royal Ballet of Cambodia at curtain call. This was a performance of a dance drama titled Apsara Mera in Paris, France.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Javanese Gamelan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Javanese_Gamelan.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Kris_met_schede_TMnr_A-1448.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kris#/media/File:COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Kris_met_schede_TMnr_A-1448.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Silat Minangkabaut. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Silat_Minangkabaut.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wayang Performance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wayang_Performance.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Javanese Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Javanese_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kris. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kris. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gamelan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamelan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wayang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayang. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Indonesia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Indonesia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- gamelan. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gamelan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- silat. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/silat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- wayang. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/wayang. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-Angkor_Wat.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Angkor_Wat#/media/File:Angkor_Wat.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Khmerladydancer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Khmerladydancer.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Ballet Camboda Apsara Mera. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Ballet_Camboda_Apsara_Mera.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Angkor Wat. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Angkor_Wat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cambodian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Cambodia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Cambodia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dance in Cambodia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance_in_Cambodia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Music of Cambodia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Cambodia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dance in Cambodia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance%20in%20Cambodia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 11.3: Java and Cambodia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

11.4: Art of Southeast Asia

Sculpture in Southeast Asia

The sculpture of Southeast Asia was heavily influenced by Indian religions and artistic styles.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Buddhist and Indian influences on Southeast Asian sculpture from 300–600 CE

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The communities and cultures of Southeast Asia were in direct contact with India through trade routes. Several Indic kingdoms competed for dominance in the region between the 1st and 8th centuries CE, particularly the Cambodian Funan and the Burmese Mon .
- Most of the Southeast Asian sculpture of the period 300–600 CE was heavily influenced by the style of the Gupta Empire in India, which patronized Buddhist art in the Greco–Buddhist style.
- Southeast Asian Buddha statues of this period were characterized by a purity of statuary and a delicacy in portraying the folds of clothing. Somewhat less attention was paid to the realism of artistic details, and symbolic, shell-like curls were used to render the hair of the Buddha.
- The Indic civilization of Champa flourished along the coasts of what is now central and southern Vietnam from 500 CE onward and left an impressive artistic legacy of sandstone sculptures, both in the round and in relief .
- In later periods, Chinese influences predominated in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Key Terms

- **Indic**: Pertaining to India or its people or culture; Indian.
- **Mon**: A people living primarily in Myanmar (also known as Burma) and Thailand; one of the earliest peoples to reside in Southeast Asia, they are responsible for the spread of Buddhism in Burma and Thailand.

Overview: Influences on Southeast Asia

A bronze standing Buddha: Sculpted in the Mon Dwaravati style, this bronze

statue from the 7th century has an idealized rather than realistic physical form, including shell-like curls for hair.

The communities and cultures of Southeast Asia were in direct contact with India through trade routes and were heavily influenced by Indian religion and art. The Pali and Sanskrit languages, Indian script, and Hindu epic literature—such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—were transmitted to Southeast Asia during this period.

Hinduism and Buddhism were brought to the region and became the main religions practiced from about the 1st century BCE to the 13th century CE. These influences played a considerable role in shaping the art and sculpture of Southeast Asia.

Sculpture in Southeast Asia

Between the 1st and 8th centuries CE, several Indic kingdoms competed for dominance in Southeast Asia, particularly the Cambodian Funan and the Burmese Mon. Most of the Southeast Asian sculpture of the period 300–600 CE was heavily influenced by the style of the Gupta Empire in India, which patronized Buddhist art in the Greco–Buddhist style.

Buddhist art in Thailand was shaped both by direct contact with Indian traders and the expansion of the Mon kingdom. In later periods, Chinese influences predominated in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and more wooden sculpture survives from across the region.

Buddhist Sculptures

Southeast Asian Buddha statues of this period were characterized by a purity of statuary and a delicacy in portraying the folds of clothing. Symbolic, shell-like curls were used to render the hair of the Buddha. Somewhat less attention was paid to the realism of artistic details. A number of votive tablets and Sanskrit inscriptions are also found in the region.

Champa

The birth of Brahma: This unfinished pediment is a fine example of Hindu art in the style of Champa. The relief sculpture shows the birth of the Hindu god Brahma from a lotus growing from the navel of Vishnu.

The Indic civilization of Champa flourished along the coasts of what is now central and southern Vietnam from 500 CE onward. This civilization left an impressive artistic legacy of sandstone sculptures, both in the round and in relief. These sculptures expressed religious themes and synthesized elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous cults. They depicted common themes, such as Hindu and Buddhist deities and icons , as well as scenes from daily life.

The Cham created freestanding sandstone sculptures in the round, as well as high and bas-relief carvings of sandstone. In general, they appear to have preferred sculpting in relief, and they excelled at sculpture in high relief .

Cham sculpture went through a marked succession of historical styles, the foremost of which produced some of the best works of Southeast Asian art. The subject-matter of Cham sculpture is drawn mostly from the legends and religion of Indian civilization. Many of the sculptures are representations of particular Hindu and Buddhist deities, most prominently Siva but also Lokesvara, Visnu, Brahma, Devi, and Shakti. Such sculptures may have served a religious purpose rather than being purely decorative.

Painting in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian painting from 300–600 CE mostly took the form of frescoes and reflected Hindu and Buddhist themes.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Hindu and Buddhist art of Southeast Asia from 300–600 CE.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Very little Southeast Asian painting from 300–600 CE has survived to the present day, owing to the heat and humidity of tropical and subtropical weather.
- Artists worked in many perishable mediums, painting mostly on wood, cloth, and palm leaf . Frescoes , usually executed on cave temple or monastery walls, are the most common form of Southeast Asian painting to have survived.
- Hinduism and Buddhism were introduced to Southeast Asia during the 1st century BCE. There were also several powerful Indic kingdoms in the region, which practiced Hinduism and Buddhism and produced art that reflected their religious beliefs.
- Hindu art commonly depicted figures from the Hindu pantheon that includes Shiva, Vishnu, and Shakti. Buddhist art depicted images of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas or enlightened beings, apsaras or celestial dancers, and tales and parables from Buddhist lore, including the Jataka tales .
- The most famous surviving examples of Southeast Asian- style frescoes are found in the rock fortress and palace ruins of Sigiriya in Sri Lanka. These date from about the 5th–6th centuries CE and depict graceful female figures bearing flowers.

Key Terms

- **pantheon**: All the gods of a particular people or religion, considered as a group.

Southeast Asian Painting from 300–500 CE

Very little Southeast Asian painting from 300–600 CE has survived to the present day, owing to the heat and humidity of tropical and subtropical weather. One can only hypothesize the styles and techniques that painters would have used based on evidence gleaned from sculptures (which are far more durable and have survived), contemporary painting styles in India (which played a large role in influencing Southeast Asian art), and literary texts that talk about painting. The few examples of painting that do survive are frescoes on cave or temple walls.

Approaches

Artists worked in perishable mediums, painting mostly on wood, cloth, and palm leaf, none of which have withstood the rigors of the Southeast Asian climate. The most durable forms of Southeast Asian art are sculpture and architecture in stone.

It is likely that stone sculptures, both in relief and in the round , were originally painted in bright colors, but these have worn away over the course of time, leaving the underlying stone exposed. Frescoes, usually executed on cave temple or monastery walls, were the most common form of Southeast Asian painting.

Themes

The themes most commonly depicted would probably mimic those found in contemporary Southeast Asian sculpture—primarily religious themes from Hindu and Buddhist mythology. Hinduism and Buddhism, both of which originated in the Indian subcontinent, were introduced to Southeast Asia from the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE.

Southeast Asia subsequently came under the influence of several powerful Indic dynasties , which established kingdoms, practiced and spread Hinduism and Buddhism through the region, and patronized art that reflected their religious beliefs.

Hindu art commonly depicts figures from the Hindu pantheon, including the gods Shiva and Vishnu and the divine female creative principle or Shakti. Buddhist art depicted images of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas or enlightened beings, apsaras or celestial dancers, and tales and parables from Buddhist lore, including the Jataka tales—stories about the previous incarnations of the Buddha, both in human and in animal form.

It is also possible that Southeast Asian painting would have depicted court and battle scenes, animals both real and mythical, and scenes from daily life. In Thai art, the most frequent narrative subjects for paintings included the Jataka stories, episodes from the

life of the Buddha, the Buddhist heavens and hells, and scenes of daily life. Some of the scenes are influenced by Thai folklore instead of following strict Buddhist iconography .

Frescoes in Sigiriya

The most famous surviving examples of Southeast Asian-style frescoes are to be found in the rock fortress and palace ruin of Sigiriya in Sri Lanka. These date from about the 5th–6th centuries CE and depict graceful female figures bearing flowers. These figures are hypothesized to be apsaras, or women of the king's court.

The paint is applied in sweeping strokes, using more pressure on one side than the other and results in deep colors toward the edge. These frescoes are reminiscent of the contemporary frescoes in the Ajanta caves in India, which are masterpieces of Buddhist religious art and depict figures from the Buddhist pantheon and scenes from the Jataka tales.

Sigiriya fresco: The frescoes at Sigiriya depict graceful female figures bearing flowers.

Northern-Style Temples in Southeast Asia

North Indian temples are often simpler and less orthodox than those in South, and all people are permitted to worship within them.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish the simplicity of northern-style Nagara temple from the complexity of the southern Dravida temple

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- India's temple architecture is developed from the creativity of Sthapathis and Shilpis, both of whom belong to the larger community of craftsmen and artisans called Vishwakarma .
- A small Hindu temple consists of an inner sanctum; the garbha graha or womb-chamber in which the idol or deity is housed; a congregation hall; and sometimes an antechamber and porch.
- In contrast to the elaborate appearance of South Indian temples, most temples in North India are very simple in design. This is thought to be due, at least in part, to the attacks that Hindus have historically suffered from Muslims in this region.
- Darśana is a Sanskrit term meaning sight, vision, apparition, or glimpse; North Indian temples have a specific hall where devotees can receive this blessing.
- Śikhara, a Sanskrit word that means mountain peak, refers to the tallest tower in Northern Hindu temple architecture.
- The Somnath Mandir, a temple in Gujarat, is considered to be one of the twelve jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva and has a history dating as far back as the beginning of the common area.

Key Terms

- **circumambulation**: The act of walking around something in a circle, especially for a ritual purpose.

- **Vishwakarma**: A group that is sometimes referred to as a caste and which comprises five sub-groups (carpenters, blacksmiths, bell metalworkers, goldsmiths, and stonemasons) who describe themselves as descendants of the Hindu god by the same name.
- **sikhara**: A Sanskrit word that means mountain peak, refers to the rising tower in the Hindu temple architecture of North India.

Introduction

India's temple architecture was developed from the creativity of Sthapathis and Shilpis, both of whom belong to the larger community of craftsmen and artisans called Vishwakarma. A small Hindu temple consists of an inner sanctum; the garbha graha or womb-chamber in which the idol or deity is housed; a congregation hall; and sometimes an antechamber and porch.

The garbhagriha is crowned by a tower-like shikara. At the turn of the first millennium CE, two major types of temples existed:

1. The northern or Nagara style .
2. The southern or Dravida type of temple.

The Northern Style

In contrast to the elaborate appearance of South Indian temples, most temples in North India are very simple in design. This is thought to be due, at least in part, to the constant attacks Hindus have suffered from Muslims historically in this region. North Indian temples also tend to be less orthodox than those in the south. In many cases, all castes and categories of people are permitted to enter the innermost sanctum of these temples and worship the deity personally. However, in such cases, the deities are not adorned with valuable jewelry.

The innermost heart of this type of temple is a sanctum where a deity (usually cast in fixed stone) is present, followed by a large hall where lay worshipers can stand and obtain darśana, or divine audience.

Darśana is a Sanskrit term meaning sight, vision, apparition, or glimpse, and is most commonly used for visions of the divine in Hindu worship. These visions are either of a deity, a very holy person, or an artifact . An individual can receive darśana, or the blessing of a particular deity, within the temple, or from a saintly person, such as a great guru.

Hindu temple at Tilla Gogian: A small Hindu temple consists of an inner sanctum, a congregation hall, and sometimes an antechamber and porch. It also contains the garbha graha, or womb-chamber, in which the idol or deity is housed.

In this type of temple, there may or may not be a number of additional corridors and halls, in addition to these aforementioned worship rooms. However, in all cases, there will be space for devotees to circulate the temple in a clockwise fashion. In Hindu culture , this kind of circumambulation is a mark of respect. Many of these temples were destroyed during the Islamic rule of India during the Mughal Empire .

Śikhara, a Sanskrit word that means mountain peak, refers to the tallest tower in Northern Hindu temple architecture. Because the sikhara tower is always situated over the sanctum sanctorum, where the presiding deity is enshrined, it is the most prominent and visible part of this temple's architecture. Originally, the sikharas were homogeneous in design but, over time, secondary sikharas, which are smaller and narrower, have been plated on to the sides of many of these main sikharas.

Notable Northern Temples

The Somnath Mandir, a temple in Gujarat, is considered to be one of the twelve jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva and has a history dating as far back as the beginning of the common area. Delhi's Chhatarpur Temple, notable for its size, is one of the largest Hindu temple complexes in India.

Kedarnath Temple: Kedarnath Temple dedicated to Shiva, in Kedarnath, Uttarakhand.

Adinath Jain Temple: Sikhara in Khajuraho.

Southern-Style Temples in Southeast Asia

South India gave rise to the Dravida style of architecture and is where most of the largest Hindu temples are found.

Learning Objectives

Identify the primary temple styles of the various regions of India and southeast Asia

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The main architectural styles of Indian temples are the Dravida style of South India and the Nagara style of North India.
- The Dravida style of architecture consists primarily of temples with pyramid-shaped towers constructed of sandstone, soapstone, or granite.

- Most of the largest Hindu temples are found in South India, and specifically in Tamil Nadu. Many large bannabs (grand stone temples) still stand in South India.
- Temple ritual tends to be orthodox and elaborate, especially in the large vedic brahmincal temples, which follow the pan-Indian Sanskrit agama scriptural traditions.
- Apart from the main fixed stone deities , processional deities made of panchaloha (an alloy of gold, silver, copper, zinc, and tin) are bathed, dressed, and decorated with valuables and then taken out in processions for festivals throughout the year.
- The richer the temple, the more elaborate the festivals. However, many ancient temples in small villages with great architectural and historical heritage value languish for lack of funds for maintenance.

Key Terms

- **murtis**: Images that express a divine spirit.
- **dravida**: The main architectural style in South India.

Introduction

A Hindu temple is a place of worship for followers of Hinduism . A characteristic of most temples is the presence of murtis (statues) of the Hindu deity to whom the temple is dedicated. They are usually dedicated to one primary deity, the presiding deity, and other deities associated with the main deity. However, some temples are dedicated to several deities, and others are dedicated to murtis in an iconic form .

Many temples are in key geographical points, such as on a hilltop or near waterfalls, caves, and rivers. The main architectural styles in India are the Nagara style of North India and the Dravida style of South India.

Kapaleeswarar Temple: The tower (gopuram) of the Kapaleeswarar Temple, a typical South Indian temple complex in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

The Dravidian Style

Dravidian architecture was an architectural idiom that emerged in the Southern part of the Indian subcontinent, or South India. This style of architecture consists primarily of temples with pyramid-shaped towers constructed of sandstone, soapstone, or granite.

Dravidian-style temples consist almost invariably of the three following parts, arranged in differing manners according to the age in which they were executed.

1. The porches, or mantapas, which always cover and precede the door leading to the cell.
2. Gate-pyramids, or gopuras, which are the principal features in the quadrangular enclosures that surround the more notable temples.

3. Pillared halls (chaultris or chawadis), which are used for many purposes and are the invariable accompaniments of these temples.

In addition to these, a South Indian temple usually has a tank, called the kalyani or pushkarni, to be used for sacred purposes or for the convenience of the priests. Dwellings for the priesthood are typically attached to this kalyani.

Rituals within these temples tend to be orthodox and elaborate, especially in the large vedic brahminical temples that follow the pan-Indian Sanskrit agama scriptural traditions. Apart from the main fixed stone deities, processional deities made of panchaloha (an alloy of gold, silver, copper, zinc, and tin) are bathed, dressed, decorated with valuables, and taken out in processions for festivals throughout the year.

The richer the temple, the more elaborate the festivals. However, many ancient temples in small villages with great architectural and historical heritage value languish for lack of funds for maintenance.

The Brihadishwara Temple at sunset in Thanjavur, India: The large vedic brahminical temples of southern India follow the pan-Indian Sanskrit agama scriptural traditions.

Notable Temples in South India

Most of the largest Hindu Temples are found in South India, and specifically in Tamil Nadu. Many large bannabs (grand stone temples) still stand in South India. Famous South Indian temples include the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple in Andhra Pradesh, the Guruvayur temple in Kerala, the Chettikulangara Devi temple in Kerala, among others.

Chettikulangara Devi Temple: The Chettikulangara Devi temple in Kerala is one of the most famous examples of South Indian architecture.

Monumental Reliefs in Southeast Asia

Sculpture and architecture were intimately connected in Southeast Asia, and monumental reliefs were used to decorate the walls of buildings.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the techniques, themes, and common subjects of the monumental reliefs of Borobudur and the Khmer temples

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Relief is a sculptural technique that gives the impression that the sculpted material has been raised above the background plane .
- Relief sculptures were used to decorate the walls of buildings, particularly Hindu and Buddhist temples, and were very large.
- In Southeast Asia, this style of sculpture was greatly influenced by Indian techniques and generally portrayed religious themes with high iconographic precision. Other themes included court and battle scenes, scenes depicting daily life and the customs of the people, and animals both real and mythical.
- Most ancient Southeast Asian relief sculpture was done in bas-relief , where the projecting images have shallow overall depth; however, the kingdom of Champa in southern and central Vietnam excelled in haut-relief sculpture, which was marked by much greater depth and undercut areas.
- The most famous examples of monumental relief sculptures in Southeast Asia are to be found in the 9th-century Buddhist temple of Borobudur in Java, Indonesia.
- The Khmer of Cambodia were also renowned for their monumental bas-reliefs, which usually took narrative form to depict stories from history and mythology. The most famous example of Khmer sculpture is the 12th-century Hindu temple of Angkor Wat .

Key Terms

- **iconographic**: Related to the branch of art history that studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images, including the subjects depicted, the particular compositions and details used to do so, and other elements that are distinct from artistic style.
- **bas-relief**: A low or mostly flat sculpture that is carved into a wall or is in the form of a tile mounted flat to a wall, rather than a fully three-dimensional, free-standing figure.
- **sunken relief**: A type of sculpture largely restricted to the art of Ancient Egypt, in which the image is made by cutting the sculpture itself into a flat surface.

Overview: Relief Sculpture

Relief is a sculptural technique that gives the impression that the sculpted material has been raised above the background plane. This is accomplished by cutting into a flat surface of stone or wood, thereby lowering the field and leaving the unsculpted parts seemingly raised.

Reliefs depicting figures that are at least life-size or bigger or are attached to monuments of some sort are termed monumental reliefs by art historians, thus distinguishing them from small metal or ivory reliefs, portable sculptures, and diptychs.

Monumental Reliefs in Southeast Asia

Monumental reliefs represent an important facet of ancient Southeast Asian art, where sculpture and architecture were intimately connected with one another. As a result, relief sculpture was generally used to decorate the walls of buildings—particularly Hindu and Buddhist temples—and was accomplished on a very large scale.

It was greatly influenced by Indian styles and techniques, and it generally portrayed religious themes with high iconographic precision. Court and battle scenes, scenes depicting daily life and the customs of the people, and animals (both real and mythical) were other common subjects.

Most of ancient Southeast Asian relief sculpture was done in bas-relief, where the projecting images have shallow overall depth, although the kingdom of Champa in southern and central Vietnam excelled in haut-relief sculpture, which was marked by much greater depth and undercut areas.

Notable examples of monumental reliefs include Borobodur in Java, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, the Sanchi case in India, and many South Indian temples, including the Unakoti group of sculptures at Kailashahar, Tripura, India.

Borobudur

The most famous examples of monumental relief sculptures in Southeast Asia are to be found in the 9th-century Buddhist temple of Borobudur in Java, Indonesia. Built during the rein of the Indic Sailendra Dynasty , the temple is constructed to reveal many different levels of terraces, many of which are heavily ornamented with intricate bas-reliefs.

In total, there are 2,672 individual bas-reliefs, 1,460 of which depict narratives from Buddhist lore, including the birth and life of the Buddha. The remaining 1,212 are solely decorative.

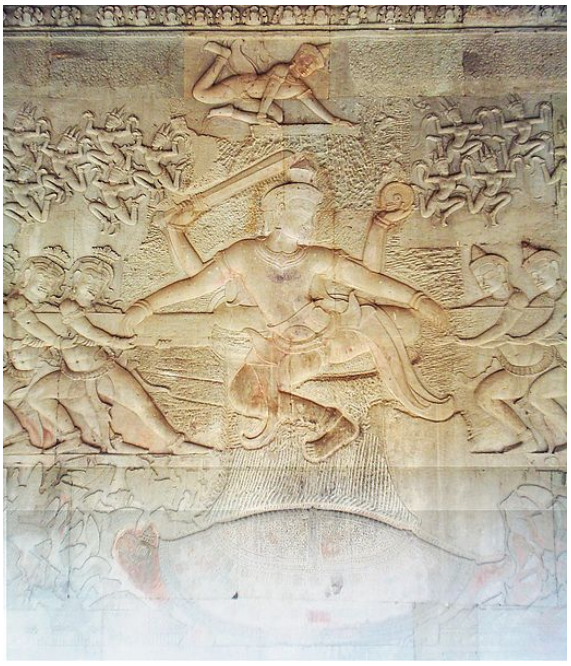
Lalitavistara Deva listening to Dhamma: Detail of carved relief from Borobudur, depicting a figure from the Buddhist pantheon.

Khmer Temples

The Khmer of Cambodia were also renowned for their monumental bas-reliefs, which usually took narrative form to depict stories from history and mythology. They decorated the tympana (semi-circular arched spaces above a doorway), walls, and ceilings with complex scenes.

The earliest surviving example of Khmer narrative bas-relief sculpture comes from the 10th-century Hindu temple of Banteay Srei, which has carved tympana and towers that depict scenes from the great Hindu epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The most famous example of Khmer bas-relief sculpture is undoubtedly at the 12th-century Hindu temple of Angkor Wat, which has 13,000 square meters of narrative bas-reliefs on the walls of its outer gallery.

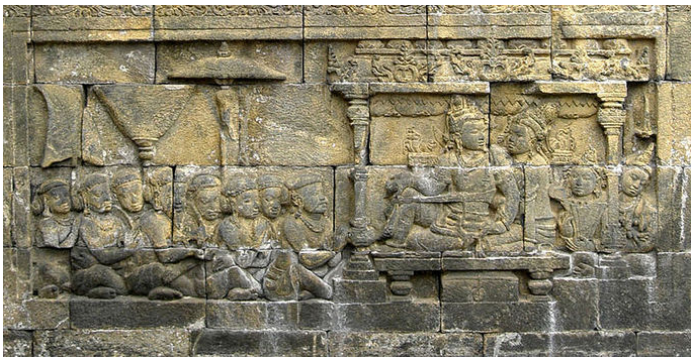


The Churning of the Sea of Milk: This episode from Hindu mythology is depicted in bas-relief on the south of the east wall of Angkor Wat's third enclosure.

Themes

The reliefs have a diverse range of themes. They depict mythical, spiritual beings from the Buddhist pantheon such as bodhisattvas , apsaras (celestial dancers or musicians), gandharvas (male nature spirits), and asuras (demons). They also depict images of people, such as the king and queen, princes, priests, courtiers, soldiers, servants, and commoners.

Many of these reliefs provide glimpses of scenes of daily life; for example, the relief sculptures from Borobudur depict scenes from 8th-century Java, including courtly palace life, a hermit in the forest, commoners in the village, temple and marketplace scenes, native vernacular architecture , and flora and fauna. These bas-relief sculptures have served as a reference for historians in the study of ancient Javanese architecture, weaponry, fashion, and transportation.



King and queen with their subjects: The bas relief from Borobudur Temple depicts a palace scene of a king and queen accompanied by their subjects. It is strongly suggested that the relief depicts an actual scene of the Sailendran royal court.

In addition, a group of 160 panels of monumental relief sculpture provides a complete illustration of the law of karma or the principles of cause and effect. There are depictions of both praiseworthy activities (including charity and pilgrimage) and blameworthy activities (ranging from gossip to murder), with their corresponding rewards and punishments. These panels provide particularly complex scenes of daily life, depicting the full panorama of samsara (the endless cycle of birth and death).

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Bronze standing Buddha, Thailand, Mon Dvaravati style, 7th-8th century, HAA. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bronze_standing_Buddha,_Thailand,_Mon_Dvaravati_style,_7th-8th_century,_HAA.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vishnu Brahma My Son E1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vishnu_Brahma_My_Son_E1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Art of Champa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Champa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Southeast asia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_asia%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture%23Asia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Indic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sigiriya fresco sacred. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sigiriya_fresco_sacred.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sigiriya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigiriya%23Frescoes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ajanta Caves. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajanta_Caves%23Paintings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vietnamese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fresco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thai art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Indonesia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Indonesia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pantheon. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pantheon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Khajuraho3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Khajuraho3.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kedarnath Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kedarnath_Temple.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hindu Temple at Tilla Gogian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hindu_Temple_at_Tilla_Gogian.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sikhara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Daru015bana. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dar%C5%9Bana. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu temple architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple%23North_Indian_temples. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shikharbaddha Mandir. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shikharbaddha_Mandir. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sikhara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/sikhara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kapaleeswarar Temple, Mylapore, Chennai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kapaleeswarar_Temple,_Mylapore,_Chennai.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Brihadishwara Temple at Sunset - Thanjavur - India 02. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brihadishwara_Temple_at_Sunset_-_Thanjavur_-_India_02.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- ChettikulangaraTemple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ChettikulangaraTemple.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dravidian Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dravidian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple%23South_Indian_temples. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hinduism/Hindu Temples. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Hinduism/Hindu_Temples%23South_Indian_Temples. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- dravida. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/dravida. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- murtis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/murtis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Awatoceanofmilk01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Awatoceanofmilk01.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 029 LalitavistaraDeva listening to Dhamma. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:029_LalitavistaraDeva_listening_to_Dhamma.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sailendra King and Queen, Borobudur. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sailendra_King_and_Queen,_Borobudur.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Monumental sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Monumental_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Relief. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/sunken-relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- bas-relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bas-relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 11.4: Art of Southeast Asia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: China and Korea After 1279 CE

12.1: The Mongols
12.2: The Yuan Dynasty
12.3: The Ming Dynasty
12.4: The Qing Dynasty
12.5: Modern Chinese Painting
12.6: Korea- The Joseon Dynasty
12.7: Modern Korean Art

This page titled 12: China and Korea After 1279 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

12.1: The Mongols

Influence of the Mongols

The Mongol Empire emerged in Central Asia during the 13th and 14th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the governmental code, extensive trade routes, and artistic accomplisments of the powerful Mongol Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During his reign, Genghis Khan began a series of invasions known as the Mongol invasions, often accompanied by the large scale massacre of civilian populations and resulting in the conquest of most of Eurasia .
- The Mongol Empire was governed by a code of law instituted by Genghis termed “Yassa,” which means “order.” The Empire is also notable for its extensive trade routes as well as its postal system, called “yam.”
- The trade routes known as the Silk Road consisted of well-traveled and well-maintained roads that linked the land from the Mediterranean basin to China, greatly increasing trade throughout the area.
- The Mongols enjoyed various art forms , and their art work was highly influential on the dynasties that followed; many paintings, illuminated manuscripts , and epics exist from the empire.
- The oldest surviving Mongolian work is “The Secret History of the Mongols,” which was written sometime after Genghis Khan’s death in 1227 and is the most significant native account of Genghis’ life and genealogy.
- The “Shahnama,” or “Book of Kings,” is an illuminated manuscript noted for its innovative compositions that blended elements of Persian, Chinese, and European painting traditions through lavish illustrations.

Key Terms

- **Silk Road**: An extensive interconnected network of trade routes across Asia, North and Northeast Africa, and Europe, historically used by silk traders.

Background: The Mongol Empire

The Mongol Empire emerged in Central Asia during the 13th and 14th centuries as the largest land empire in history. A result of the unification of Mongol and Turkic tribes, the empire took form under the leadership of the legendary Genghis Khan, also known as the Great Khan, meaning emperor. During his reign, Genghis Khan began a series of invasions known as the Mongol invasions, often accompanied by the large scale massacre of civilian populations and resulting in the conquest of most of Eurasia. After Genghis Khan’s death, the empire began to split as a result of wars between succession heirs.

The Mongol Empire was governed by a code of law instituted by Genghis and termed “Yassa,” meaning “order.” Those of rank shared many of the same hardships as common people, resulting in an empire that was generally disciplined and well-run. Any resistance to Mongol rule was met with massive and collective punishment. The society practiced religious tolerance, and many religions found homes in the empire.

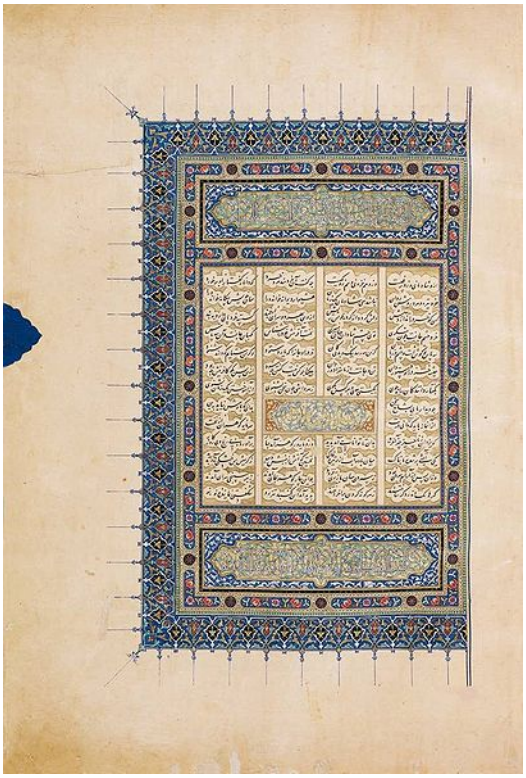
The Mongol Empire is notable for its extensive trade routes as well as its postal system, which was called “yam.” This postal system was very advanced and was later replicated in the United States, where it was known as the Pony Express. The trade routes known as the Silk Road consisted of well-traveled and well-maintained roads that linked the land from the Mediterranean basin to China, greatly increasing trade throughout the area. Genghis Khan encouraged trade during his reign as merchants provided both information about neighboring cultures and necessary goods that the Mongols didn’t produce.

Art in the Mongol Empire

The Mongols enjoyed various art forms, and their art work was highly influential on the dynasties that followed. The ruling classes were active patrons , and many paintings, illuminated manuscripts, and epics exist from the empire. The oldest surviving Mongolian work is “The Secret History of the Mongols,” which was written for the royal family sometime after Genghis Khan’s

death in 1227. It is the most significant native account of Genghis' life and genealogy, covering his origins and childhood through to the establishment of the Mongol Empire and the reign of his son, Ögedei.

Another important work from the empire, the "Shahnama," is an illuminated manuscript noted for its innovative compositions blending elements of Persian, Chinese, and European painting traditions in its lavish illustrations. The Jami' al-tawarikh, or "Universal History," was commissioned in the early 14th century by the Ilkhan Abaqa Khan as a way of documenting the entire world's history in order to establish the Mongols' own cultural legacy.



Illuminated manuscript from the Shahnama: The "Shahnama" is an illuminated manuscript noted for its innovative compositions that blended elements of Persian, Chinese, and European painting traditions.

Other pieces of literature have long been orally traded and typically consist of alliterative verses; these are known as Üligers, which literally means 'tales.' They include the proverbs attributed to Genghis Khan and the epics around the Khan's life. Already at the time of the Mongol empire, samples of Buddhist and Indian literature became known in Mongolia. Another wave of translations of Indian/Tibetan texts came with Mongolia's conversion to Tibetan Buddhism in the late 16th/early 17th centuries.

Mongol scribes in the 14th century used a mixture of resin and vegetable pigments as a primitive form of correction fluid; this is arguably its first known usage. The Mongols also appreciated the visual arts, though their portraiture tended to focus on portraits of their horses rather than of people.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Baysonghori Shahnameh 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Baysonghori_Shahnameh_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Culture of Mongolia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Mongolia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mongol Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongol_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shahnameh. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahnameh. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Silk Road. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Silk_Road. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.1: The Mongols is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

12.2: The Yuan Dynasty

Painting under the Yuan Dynasty

The Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) saw the consolidation of poetry, painting, and calligraphy into a unified canon of classical Chinese art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the fusion of styles in painting during the Yuan Dynasty, as well as the influencial artists who returned to the “blue and green” landscape style

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Yuan Dynasty was a time of important developments in the areas of painting, calligraphy , poetry, and theater, with many great artists practicing more than one medium .
- With the Yuan Dynasty, many artists retreated from social life and returned to nature through landscape paintings.
- Wang Meng was a leading painter of the Yuan Dynasty, and one of his most famous works is the Forest Grotto.
- Zhao Mengfu was a Chinese scholar, painter, and calligrapher who rejected the refined, gentle brushwork of his era in favor of the cruder style of the 8th century; he is considered to have brought about a revolution that created the modern Chinese landscape painting.
- Among the Yuan Dynasty artists, there were also the vivid and detailed works by Qian Xuan, who was famous for reviving and reproducing a more Tang Dynasty style of painting.
- The later Yuan Dynasty is characterized by the work of the so-called “Four Great Masters,” including Huang Gongwang, whose cool and restrained landscapes were admired by contemporaries and by the Chinese literati painters of later centuries.

Key Terms

- **Wang Meng**: (c. 1308–1385) A Chinese painter of the Yuan Dynasty who famously refused to serve the Mongolian rulers of their country.
- **Yuan Dynasty**: The empire established by Kublai Khan, the leader of the Mongolian Borjigin clan, after the Mongols conquered the Jin and Southern Song Dynasty in China; lasting from 1271 to 1368.
- **Zhao Mengfu**: (1254–1322) A Chinese prince and descendant of the Song Dynasty’s imperial family, and a scholar, painter, and calligrapher during the Yuan Dynasty.

Overview: The Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368)

With the fall of the Song Dynasty in 1279 and the subsequent dislocation caused by the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty by the Mongol conquerors, many court and literary artists retreated from social life. This was a time of important developments in the areas of painting, calligraphy, poetry, and theater, with many great artists practicing more than one medium. A great deal of artwork of the Yuan Dynasty has survived in China, relative to works from the Tang Dynasty and Song Dynasties, which have often been better preserved in places such as the Shōsōin in Japan.

Painting, Calligraphy, Poetry, and Theatre

One of the important cultural developments during the Yuan era was the consolidation of poetry, painting, and calligraphy into a unified piece that tends to come to mind when people think of classical Chinese art. The Song Dynasty and the Yuan Dynasty are linked together through the development of landscape painting, as well as the classical joining of calligraphy and poetry. In Yuan poetry, *qu* was the main development, which was used among other poetic forms by most of the famous Yuan poets. The qu form of poetry consists of words written in one of a number of certain, set tone patterns, based upon the tunes of various songs.

Many of the poets were also involved in the major developments in the theater during this time. *Zazu* was a form of Chinese drama or opera that provided entertainment through a synthesis of recitations of prose and poetry, dance, singing, and mime, with a certain

emphasis on comedy or happy endings. One of the key factors in the common zaju variety shows was the incorporation of poetry both classical and of the newer qu form.

Influential Artists

Wang Meng was a famous painter of the Yuan Dynasty, and one of his most famous works is the *Forest Grotto*. Zhao Mengfu was a Chinese scholar, painter, and calligrapher, whose rejection of the refined, gentle brushwork of his era in favor of the cruder style of the 8th century is considered to have brought about a revolution that created the modern Chinese landscape painting. There was also the vivid and detailed works of art by Qian Xuan (1235–1305), who had served the Song court and out of patriotism refused to serve the Mongols. Instead, Qian Xuan turned to painting and became famous for his return to nature through landscape painting and his renewal of the "blue and green" style of the Tang Dynasty.

Forest Grotto in Juqu by Wang Meng (1378): Wang Meng and the great masters of the Yuan Dynasty exclusively painted landscapes, which they believed to be the visible key to the invisible reality.

The later Yuan Dynasty is characterized by the work of the so-called "Four Great Masters." The most notable of these was Huang Gongwang (1269–1354), whose cool and restrained landscapes were admired by contemporaries and by the Chinese literati painters of later centuries. Another man of great influence was Ni Zan (1301–1374), who frequently arranged his compositions with a strong and distinct foreground and background, leaving the middle ground as an empty expanse. This scheme was frequently adopted by later Ming and Qing Dynasty painters.

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains by Huang Gongwang (c. 1350): Huang Gongwang rejected the landscape conventions of his era's Academy but is regarded as one of the great literati painters.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Wang Meng.nForest Grotto in Juqu.n1378.n68,8x42,5 National Palace Museum Taipei. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wang_Meng._Forest_Grotto_in_Juqu._1378._68,8x42,5_National_Palace_Museum_Taipei.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- DwellingInTheFuchun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DwellingInTheFuchun.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art%23Yuan_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yuan Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuan_Dynasty%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yuan Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuan_Dynasty%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zhao Mengfu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhao%20Mengfu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yuan Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuan%20Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wang Meng. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang%20Meng. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.2: The Yuan Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

12.3: The Ming Dynasty

Painting under the Ming Dynasty

During the Ming Dynasty, Chinese painting developed from the achievements of the earlier Song and Yuan Dynasties.

Learning Objectives

Identify the time period and innovations of the Zhe, Yuanti, Wu, Wongjang, and Huating Schools of painting during the Ming dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Compared to earlier styles , the Ming Dynasty saw the use of more colors, the development of new painting skills and techniques, and the advancement of calligraphy within paintings.
- The first dominant Ming style was called the Zhe School ; however, later conditions led to the rise of the Wu School, a somewhat subversive style that revived the ideal of the inspired scholar-painters in Ming China.
- The Zhe School and Yuanti School began to prosper during the early Ming period, while the painting schools of the Yuan dynasty began to decline.
- Both the Zhe and Yuanti Schools declined during the mid-Ming period while the Wu School prospered, inheriting and further developing the Yuan scholar-artist style of painting.
- The Wu School painters Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, Shen Zhou, and Qiu Ying were regarded as the “Four Masters” of the Ming period.
- The late Ming period witnessed the rise of the Songjiang School and Huating School, both of which contributed to the development of the Shanghai School in the late 19th century.

Key Terms

- **Songjiang School**: A school during the late Ming Dynasty that rivaled Wumen, particularly in generating new theories of painting.
- **Yuanti School**: A school that was organized and supported by the Ming central government, and served for Ming royal court.
- **Zhe School**: A school of painters that was part of the Southern School, which thrived during the Ming Dynasty and was known for its formal, academic, and conservative outlook.

Background: The Ming Dynasty

Under the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), painters had practiced with relative freedom, cultivating a more “individualist” and innovative approach to art that deviated noticeably from the more superficial style of the Song masters who preceded them. However, at the outset of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the Hongwu emperor (1368–1398) decided to import the existing master painters to his court in Nanjing, where he had the ability to cultivate their styles to conform to the paintings of the Song masters. Hongwu was notorious for his attempts to marginalize and persecute the scholar class, and this was seen as an attempt to banish the gentry’s influence from the arts.

The dominant style of the Ming court painters was called the Zhe School. However, following the ascension of the Yongle emperor (1403–1424), the capital was moved from Nanjing to Beijing, putting a large distance between imperial influence and the city of Suzhou. These new conditions led to the rise of the Wu School of painting, a somewhat subversive style that revived the ideal of the inspired scholar-painters in Ming China.

Painting Styles

During the Ming Dynasty, Chinese painting developed greatly from the achievements of the earlier Song Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty. The painting techniques that were invented and developed before the Ming period became classical during this period. More colors were used in painting during the Ming Dynasty; seal brown, for example, became much more widely used, and

sometimes even over-used. Many new painting skills and techniques were innovated and developed, and calligraphy was much more closely and perfectly combined with the art of painting. Chinese painting reached another climax in the mid- to late-Ming Dynasty, when many new schools were born and many outstanding masters emerged.

Landscape in the Style of Yan Wengui by Dai Jin, hanging scroll, ink on paper (Early Ming Dynasty): Painting techniques that were invented and developed before the Ming period became classical during this period. This Chinese landscape painting uses the “atmospheric perspective” to show recession in space.

Development

Early Ming Period (1368–1505)

The painting schools of the Yuan Dynasty still heavily influenced early Ming painting, but new schools of painting were also growing. In particular, the Zhe School and the Yuanti School were the dominant schools during the early Ming period. The painters of the Zhe School did not formulate a new distinctive style, preferring instead to further the style of the Southern Song and specializing in large and decorative paintings, most often of landscapes. The school was identified by a formal, academic, and conservative outlook. The Yuanti School was organized and supported by the Ming central government to serve the Ming royal court. Both of these new schools were heavily influenced by the traditions of both the Southern Song painting academy and the Yuan scholar-artists.

Middle Ming Period (1465–1566)

The classical Zhe School and Yuanti School began to decline during the mid-Ming period. Meanwhile, the Wu School (sometimes referred to as Wumen) became the most dominant school nationwide. Its formation is credited to painter Shen Zhou, who is known for using brushstrokes in the tradition of Yuan Dynasty masters. Suzhou, the activity center for Wu School painters, became the biggest center for Chinese painting during this period. The Wumen painters mainly inherited the Yuan scholar-artist style of painting and further developed this style into its peak. The painters Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, Shen Zhou, and Qiu Ying were regarded as the “Four Masters” of the Ming period.

Often classified as Literati , scholars, or amateur painters (as opposed to professionals), members of the Wu School idealized the concepts of personalizing works and integrating the artists into the art. A Wu School painting is characterized by inscriptions describing the painting, the date, method, and/or reason for the work, which is usually seen as a vehicle for personal expression.

Late Ming Period (1567–1644)

The Songjiang School and Huating School were born and developed toward the end of the Ming Dynasty. The Songjiang School grew to rival the Wu School, particularly in generating new theories of painting. Both the Songjiang and Huating Schools formed the basis for the later Shanghai School in the late 19th century.

The Decorative Arts under the Ming Dynasty

As with many art forms, the Ming Dynasty saw advancement in the realm of decorative arts such as porcelain and lacquerware.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the advancements in Chinese porcelain during the Ming dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In Ming China, carved designs in lacquerwares and designs glazed onto porcelain wares displayed intricate scenes similar in complexity to those in painting.
- Elaborate decorative items could be found in the homes of the wealthy alongside embroidered silks, rosewood furniture, feathery latticework, and wares of jade , ivory , and cloisonné. The major production centers for porcelain items in the Ming Dynasty were Jingdezhen in the Jiangxi province and Dehua in the Fujian province.
- The Dehua porcelain factories catered to European tastes by creating Chinese export porcelain by the 16th century.
- Connoisseurship in the late Ming period centered around these items of refined artistic taste, which provided work for art dealers and even underground scam artists who made fake imitations of originals.

Key Terms

- **Ming Dynasty**: The ruling dynasty of China for 276 years (1368–1644), following the collapse of the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty; the last dynasty in China ruled by the ethnic Han Chinese.
- **cloisonne**: A decorative technique for metalwork, especially brass, whereby colored enamel is baked between raised ridges of the metal.

- **lacquerwares**: Objects (including boxes, tablewares, buttons, etc.) decoratively covered with a clear or colored wood finish that dries by solvent evaporation or a curing process and produces a hard, durable finish; the finish is sometimes inlaid or carved.
- **porcelain**: A hard, white, translucent ceramic that is made by firing kaolin and other materials.

Overview: Decorative Arts in China

The art form that the post-Renaissance West calls the decorative arts is extremely important in Chinese art. Most of the finest decorative arts were produced in large workshops or factories by essentially unknown artists, especially in the field of Chinese porcelain. Much of the best work in ceramics , textiles, and other techniques was produced over a long period by the various Imperial factories or workshops. In addition to being used by the court, these works were distributed internally and abroad on a huge scale to demonstrate the wealth and power of the Emperors. In contrast , the tradition of ink wash painting, practiced primarily by scholar-officials, developed aesthetic values similar to those of the West while long pre-dating their development there.

The Ming Dynasty

As in earlier dynasties, the Ming Dynasty saw a flourishing in the arts, whether it was painting, poetry, music, literature, or dramatic theater. In the decorative arts, carved designs in lacquerwares and designs glazed onto porcelain wares displayed intricate scenes similar in complexity to those in painting. These items could be found in the homes of the wealthy alongside embroidered silks and wares of jade, ivory, and cloisonné. The houses of the rich were also furnished with rosewood furniture and feathery latticework. The writing materials in a scholar's private study, including elaborately carved brush holders made of stone or wood, were all designed and arranged ritually to give an aesthetic appeal.

A Ming Dynasty red lacquer box with intricate carving of people in the countryside, surrounded by a floral border design: Carved designs in lacquerwares and designs glazed onto porcelain wares displayed intricate scenes similar in complexity to those in painting.

The major production centers for porcelain items in the Ming Dynasty were Jingdezhen in the Jiangxi province and Dehua in the Fujian province. By the 16th century, the Dehua porcelain factories catered to European tastes by creating Chinese export porcelain. Individual potters also became known, such as He Chaozong, who became famous in the early 17th century for his style of white porcelain sculpture . Scholars estimate that about 16% of late Ming era Chinese ceramic exports were sent to Europe, while the rest were destined for Japan and South East Asia. Beginning in the Ming Dynasty, ivory began to be used for small statuettes of the gods and others.

A blue and white porcelain vase with cloud and dragon designs, marked with the word “Longevity,” Jiajing period of Ming Dynasty: One of the 340,000 pieces of ceramics and porcelain held at The Palace Museum of the Forbidden City.

Connoisseurship in the late Ming period centered around these items of refined artistic taste, which provided work for art dealers and even underground scam artists who made fake imitations of originals and false attributions to works of art. However, there were guides to help the wary new connoisseur; in Liu Tong’s book printed in 1635, he told his readers various ways to differentiate between fake and authentic pieces of art. He revealed that a Xuande era (1426–1435) bronzework could be authenticated if one knew how to judge its sheen; porcelain wares from the Yongle era (1402–1424) could be similarly judged by their thickness.

Architecture and Urban Planning under the Ming Dynasty

Chinese urban planning and architecture under the Ming Dynasty are based on fengshui geomancy and numerology, as seen in the Forbidden City.

Learning Objectives

Describe how fengshui and numerology influenced the architecture and urban planning of the Ming Dynasty, as seen in the capital of Beijing

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Chinese urban planning is based on fengshui geomancy and the well-field system of land division.

- Fengshui geomancy is a way of orienting buildings in an auspicious manner based on a number of elements; an auspicious site could be determined by reference to local features such as bodies of water, stars, or a compass.
- In the well-field system of land division, a square area of land is divided into nine identically-sized sections; the eight outer sections were privately cultivated by serfs, while the center section was communally cultivated on behalf of the landowning aristocrat.
- Numerology heavily influenced Imperial architecture, hence the use of nine in much of construction (nine being the greatest single digit number).
- The Forbidden City was the Chinese imperial palace from 1420 to 1912. It is located in the center of Beijing and served as the home of emperors and their households as well as the ceremonial and political center of Chinese government.
- The palace complex exemplifies traditional Chinese palatial architecture and has influenced cultural and architectural developments in East Asia and elsewhere.

Key Terms

- **numerology**: The study of the purported mystical relationship between numbers and the character or action of physical objects and living things.
- **Forbidden City**: The palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which is now preserved as a museum in Beijing, China.
- **fengshui**: A Chinese philosophical system of harmonizing with the surrounding environment; it is closely linked to Daoism.

Chinese Architecture and Urban Planning After 1279

Fengshui Geomancy

Chinese urban planning is based on fengshui geomancy and the well-field system of land division, both used since the Neolithic age. Fengshui geomancy is a way of orienting buildings in an auspicious manner based on a number of elements. Depending on the particular style of fengshui being used, an auspicious site could be determined by reference to local features such as bodies of water, stars, or a compass. The importance of the East (the direction of the rising sun) in orienting and siting Imperial buildings is a form of solar worship found in many ancient cultures , where there is the notion of Ruler being affiliated with the Sun.

The Well-field System and Numerology

The well-field system of land division is a system in which a square area of land is divided into nine identically-sized sections; the eight outer sections were privately cultivated by serfs, while the center section was communally cultivated on behalf of the landowning aristocrat. The basic well-field diagram is overlaid with the *luoshu*, a magic square divided into 9 sub-squares and linked with Chinese numerology.

Numerology heavily influenced Imperial architecture, as seen in the use of nine in much of construction (nine being the greatest single digit number). It is a common myth, for example, that there are 9,999 rooms and antechambers in the Forbidden City in Beijing—just short of the mythical 10,000 rooms in Heaven; however, this is based on oral tradition and is not supported by survey evidence.

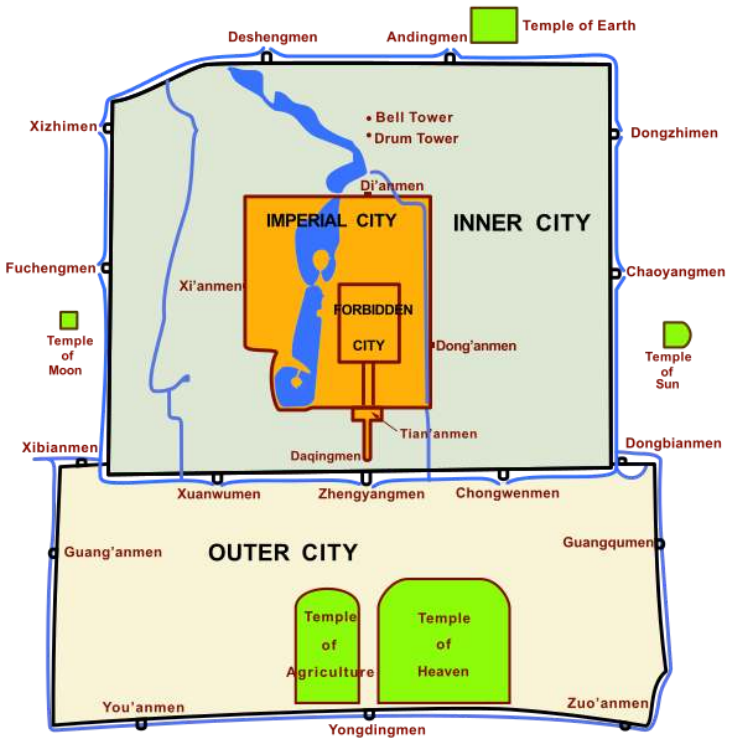
Beijing and the Forbidden City

Beijing became the capital of China after the Mongol invasion of the 13th century, completing the easterly migration of the Chinese capital begun in the earlier Jin dynasty . The Ming uprising in 1368 reasserted Chinese authority and fixed Beijing as the seat of imperial power for the next five centuries.

The Forbidden City was the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty—the years 1420 to 1912. It is located in the center of Beijing and served as the home of emperors and their households as well as the ceremonial and political center of Chinese government for almost 500 years. Constructed from 1406 to 1420, the complex consists of 980 buildings and covers 180 acres. The palace complex exemplifies traditional Chinese palatial architecture and has influenced cultural and architectural developments in East Asia and elsewhere. Traditionally, the Emperor and Empress lived in palaces on the central axis of the Forbidden City, while the Crown Prince lived at the eastern side and the concubines lived toward the back (leading to the reference of the numerous imperial concubines as the “Back Palace Three Thousand”). Later, during the mid-Qing Dynasty, the Emperor’s residence was moved to the western side of the complex.

The Forbidden City: The Forbidden City was the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty. It is located in the middle of Beijing, China, and now houses the Palace Museum. For almost 500 years, it served as the home of emperors and their households, as well as the ceremonial and political center of Chinese government.

The Forbidden City is a rectangle, measuring 961 meters from north to south and 753 meters from east to west. It consists of 980 surviving buildings with 8,886 bays of rooms. The Forbidden City remains important in the civic scheme of Beijing, with its central north-south axis remaining the central axis of the entire city. The Forbidden City is located within the larger Imperial City in Beijing, which is in turn encompassed by the Inner City. Its axis extends to the south through Tiananmen gate to Tiananmen Square, the ceremonial center of the People's Republic of China, and on to Yongdingmen. To the north, it extends through Jingshan Hill to the Bell and Drum Towers. This axis is not exactly aligned north-south but is instead tilted by slightly more than two degrees. Researchers now believe the axis was designed in the Yuan Dynasty to be aligned with Xanadu, the other capital of their empire.

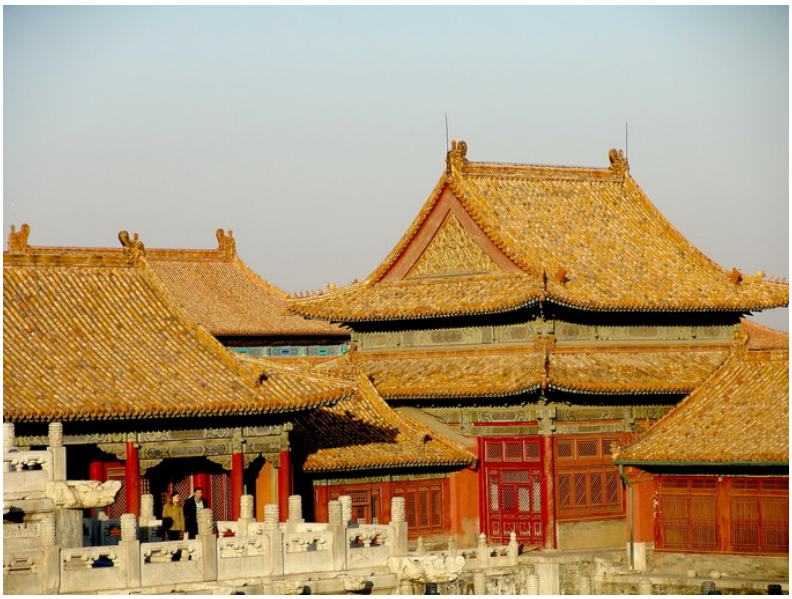


Map showing the location of the Forbidden City in the historic center of Beijing: The Forbidden City is located within the larger Imperial City in Beijing, which is in turn encompassed by the Inner City. The Outer City lies south of the Inner City.

Symbolic Design

The design of the Forbidden City, from its overall layout to the smallest detail, was meticulously planned to reflect philosophical and religious principles and the majesty of Imperial power. Some noted examples of symbolic designs include:

- The use of yellow, the color of the Emperor. Almost all roofs in the Forbidden City bear yellow glazed tiles, with only two exceptions. The library at the Pavilion of Literary Profundity has black tiles because black was associated with water, and thus fire prevention; similarly, the Crown Prince's residences have green tiles because green was associated with wood, and thus growth.



Ming architecture: The yellow roof tiles and red walls in the Forbidden City (Palace Museum) grounds in Beijing, built during the Yongle era (1402–1424) of the Ming Dynasty.

- The use of numerology. The main halls of the Outer and Inner courts, for example, are all arranged in groups of three in the shape of the Qian triagram, representing Heaven. The residences of the Inner Court, on the other hand, are arranged in groups of six in the shape of the Kun triagram, representing the Earth.
- The use of statuettes to indicate importance. The sloping ridges of building roofs are decorated with a line of statuettes led by a man riding a phoenix and followed by an imperial dragon. The number of statuettes represents the status of the building; for example, a minor building might have only 3 or 5, while the Hall of Supreme Harmony is the only building to have 10.

Roof Statuettes: This image shows the Imperial roof decoration of the highest status on the roof ridge of the Hall of Supreme Harmony, with 10 statuettes.

- The layout of buildings. The layout follows ancient customs laid down in the Classic of Rites (a collection of texts describing the social forms, administration, and ceremonial rites of the earlier Zhou dynasty). Thus, ancestral temples are in front of the palace, storage areas are placed in the front part of the palace complex, and residences are placed in the back.

Chinese Literati Expressionism under the Ming Dynasty

Literati Expressionism in Chinese painting was produced by scholar-bureaucrats of the Southern School, rather than by professional painters.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate the literati Southern School of Chinese painting from its professional counterpart in the North

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Under the Ming Dynasty , Chinese culture bloomed. Narrative painting, with a wider color range and a much busier composition than the Song paintings, was immensely popular during the time.
- The Southern School of Chinese painting, often known as ” literati painting,” is a term used to denote art and artists that stand in opposition to the formal Northern School of painting. Southern School painters generally worked in monochrome ink, focused on expressive brushstrokes, and used a more impressionistic approach than the Northern School’s formal attention to detail, use of color, and highly refined traditional modes and methods.
- Literati paintings are most commonly of landscapes featuring men in retirement or travelers admiring the scenery or immersed in culture. Figures are often depicted residing in isolated mountain hermitages .
- Calligraphic inscriptions, either of classical poems or ones composed by a contemporary literati (typically the painter or a friend), are also quite common in these paintings.

Key Terms

- **Southern School**: A style of Chinese literati painting formed during the Ming Dynasty in opposition to the formal Northern School of painting; led by scholar-bureaucrats, who had either retired from the professional world or had never been a part of it.
- **Confucianism**: A Chinese ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucious.

Overview: The Southern School and Literati Painting

Under the Ming Dynasty, Chinese culture bloomed. Narrative painting, with a wider color range and a much busier composition than the previous paintings of the Song Dynasty, was immensely popular during the time.

The Southern School of Chinese painting, often known as “literati painting,” is a term used to denote art and artists that stand in opposition to the formal Northern School of painting. Where formal and professional painters were classified as Northern School, scholar-bureaucrats, who had either retired from the professional world or who had never been a part of it, constituted the Southern School.

History

Never a formal school of art in the sense of artists training under a single master in a single studio, the Southern School is more of an umbrella term spanning a great breadth across both geography and chronology. The literati lifestyle and attitude, as well as the associated style of painting, can be said to go back to early periods of Chinese history. However, the coining of the term “Southern School” is said to have been made by the scholar-artist Dong Qichang (1555–1636), who borrowed the concept from Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism , which also has Northern and Southern Schools.

The Literati Style and Artists

Generally, Southern School painters worked in monochrome ink, focused on expressive brushstrokes, and used a somewhat more impressionistic approach than the Northern School’s formal attention to detail, use of color, and highly refined traditional modes and methods. The stereotypical literati painter lived in retirement either in the mountains or other rural areas, not entirely isolated but immersed in natural beauty and far from mundane concerns. These artists tended to be lovers of culture, enjoying and taking part in all Four Arts of the Chinese Scholar (painting, calligraphy , music, and games of skill and strategy) as touted by Confucianism . Many artists would combine these elements into their work and would gather with one another to share their interests.

Artwork by Wen Zhengming, a leading Ming Dynasty painter: Wen Zhengming often chose painting subjects of great simplicity, like a single tree or rock. His work often brings about a feeling of strength through isolation, which often reflected his discontent with official life.

Literati paintings are most commonly of landscapes, often of the shanshui (“mountain water”) genre . Many feature scholars in retirement or travelers admiring the scenery or immersed in culture. Figures are often depicted carrying or playing guqin (a plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument of the zither family) and residing in quite isolated mountain hermitages. Calligraphic inscriptions, either of classical poems or ones composed by a contemporary literati (typically the painter or a friend), are also quite common. While this sort of landscape with certain features and elements is the standard stereotypical Southern School painting, the genre actually varied quite widely in rejecting the formal strictures of the Northern School. The painters sought the freedom to experiment with subjects and styles.

Dong Qichang, Wanluan Thatched Hall (1597): hanging scroll, ink and light colors on paper: Dong Qichang created landscapes with intentionally distorted spatial features.

Like other traditions in Chinese art, the early Southern style soon acquired a classic status and was often copied and imitated, with later painters sometimes producing sets of paintings each in the style of a different classic artist. Though greatly affected by the confrontation with Western painting from the 18th century on, the style continued to be practiced until at least the 20th century.

Shen Zhou, Lofty Mt.Lu (廬) Hanging scroll, ink and light colors on paper (1467): Shen Zhou paintings reveal a disciplined obedience to the styles of the Yuan Dynasty, to China's history, and to the orthodox Confucianism that he embodied in his filial life.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Dai Jin-Landscape in the Style of Yan Wengui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dai_Jin-Landscape_in_the_Style_of_Yan_Wengui.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Zhe school (painting). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhe_school_(painting). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shen Zhou. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shen_Zhou. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ming Dynasty painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ming_Dynasty_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zhe School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhe%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yuanti School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuanti%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Songjiang School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Songjiang%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wu School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- B-ChinesischeLackdose. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:B-ChinesischeLackdose.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- China ming blue dragons. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:China_ming_blue_dragons.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Ming Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ming_Dynasty%23Urban_and_rural_life. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- porcelain. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/porcelain. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lacquerwares. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/lacquerwares. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ming Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ming%20Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- cloisonne. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cloisonne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Beijing-forbidden7. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Beijing-forbidden7.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- HighStatusRoofDeco.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbidden_City#/media/File:HighStatusRoofDeco.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Gugun panorama-2005-1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gugun_panorama-2005-1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 591px-Beijing_city_wall_map_vectorized.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbidden_City#/media/File:Beijing_city_wall_map_vectorized.svg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Forbidden City. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Forbidden_City. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Chinese urban planning. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Chinese_urban_planning. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fengshui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fengshui. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Luoshu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Luoshu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- numerology. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/numerology. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wen Zhengming painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wen_Zhengming_painting.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Lofty Mt.Lu by Shen Zhou. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lofty_Mt.Lu_by_Shen_Zhou.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Wanluan Thatched Hall by Dong Qichang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wanluan_Thatched_Hall_by_Dong_Qichang.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art%23Yuan_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Southern School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wu School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dong Qichang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dong_Qichang. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Southern School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Confucianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.3: The Ming Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

12.4: The Qing Dynasty

Orthodox Confucian Painting under the Qing Dynasty

The early Qing Dynasty developed in two main strands, one of which was the Orthodox school of Confucian paintings.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate the work of the Six Orthodox Masters of the Qing Dynasty from that of their individualist contemporaries

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Under the Qing Dynasty , traditional forms of art flourished and innovations were made at many levels and in many types. High levels of literacy, prosperous cities, a successful publishing industry, and the Confucian emphasis on cultivation all fed a lively and creative set of cultural fields.
- The early Qing dynasty developed in two main strands: the Orthodox School and the Individualist painters. Both approaches followed the theories of Dong Qichang but stressed different aspects.
- The Six Masters of the early Qing period were a group of major Orthodox artists whose art was generally conservative, cautious, subtle, and complex, in contrast to the vigorous and vivid painting of their individualist contemporaries.The Four Wangs—Wang Jian, Wang Shimin, Wang Yuanqi, and Wang Hui—were particularly renowned in the Orthodox School and sought inspiration in recreating the past styles , especially the technical skills in brushstrokes and calligraphy of ancient masters.

Key Terms

- **“Four Wangs”**: A group of Chinese painters of the Qing Dynasty, particularly renowned in the ç, who sought inspiration in recreating the past styles, especially the technical skills in brushstrokes and calligraphy of ancient masters.

Overview: Qing Dynasty Painting

The Qing Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China, ruling from 1644 to 1912 with a brief, abortive restoration in 1917. It was preceded by the Ming Dynasty and succeeded by the Republic of China. The Qing multi-cultural empire lasted almost three centuries and formed the territorial base for the modern Chinese state.

Under the Qing Dynasty, traditional forms of art flourished and many types of innovations were made at many levels. High levels of literacy, prosperous cities, a successful publishing industry, and the Confucian emphasis on cultivation all fed a lively and creative set of cultural fields. The early Qing dynasty developed in two main strands of painting: the Orthodox School and the Individualist painters. Both schools followed the theories of Dong Qichang, though emphasizing very different aspects.

Orthodox Painting

The Qing emperors were often skilled in painting and offered their patronage to Confucian culture . The Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors, for instance, embraced Chinese traditions both to control them and to proclaim their own legitimacy. Under the Orthodox School, court painters made new versions of the Song masterpiece, Zhang Zeduan ‘s *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*, whose depiction of a prosperous and happy realm demonstrated the beneficence of the emperor. The most impressive aesthetic works during this period were done among the scholars and urban elite. Calligraphy and painting remained a central interest to both court painters and scholar-gentry who considered the Four Arts (music, strategy games, calligraphy, and painting) part of their cultural identity and social standing.

The painting of the early years of the dynasty included such painters as the orthodox Six Masters, including the Four Wangs. The 19th century saw such innovations as the Shanghai School and the Lingnan School, which used the technical skills of tradition to set the stage for modern painting.

The Six Masters

The Six Masters of the early Qing period were a group of major Chinese artists who worked in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Also known as Orthodox masters, they continued the tradition of the scholar-painter, following the injunctions of the artist-critic Dong Qichang late in the Ming Dynasty. The works of the Six Masters are generally conservative, cautious, subtle, and complex in contrast to the vigorous and vivid painting of their individualist contemporaries.

Yun Shouping, Peonies, Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk (17th-18th century): Yun's style was vibrant and expressive; he attempted to display the inner vitality and spirit of his subjects in painting.

The Six Masters include the flower painter Yun Shouping, the landscape painter Wu Li, and the Four Wangs: Wang Shimin, Wang Jian, Wang Yuanqi, and Wang Hui. The Four Wangs were particularly renowned in the Orthodox School and sought inspiration in recreating the past styles, especially the technical skills in brushstrokes and calligraphy of ancient masters. The younger Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715) ritualized the approach of engaging with, and drawing inspiration from, the work of an ancient master. His own works were often annotated with his theories of how his paintings relate to the master's model.

Wang Hui, Clearing Autum Sky over a Fishing Vilage, hanging scroll, ink and light colors on paper (1680): Wang Hui and the three other Wangs dominated Orthodox art in China throughout the late Ming and early Qing periods. Of the Four Wangs, Wang Hui is considered to be the best known today.

Individualist Painting under the Qing Dynasty

During the Qing Dynasty, painters known as Individualists rebelled against many of the traditional rules of painting through free brushwork.

Learning Objectives

Explain how the work of Individualists of the Qing Dynasty, such as Shitao, deviated from the traditional rules of painting.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), two main strands of painting developed: the Orthodox School and the Individualist painters.
- While Orthodox painters such as the Six Masters focused on a style that was conservative, cautious, subtle, and complex, Individualist painters tended to produce more vigorous and vivid works of art.
- The Individualist painters included Bada Shanren and Shitao , who drew more from the revolutionary ideas of transcending the tradition to achieve an original, individualistic style.
- The art created by Shitao was revolutionary in its transgressions of the rigidly codified techniques and styles that dictated what was considered beautiful.

Key Terms

- **Qing Dynasty**: The last dynasty of China, lasting from 1644 to 1912.
- **Bada Shanren**: (1626-1705) A Chinese painter of shuimohua and a calligrapher.
- **Shitao**: (1641-1707) A Chinese landscape painter and poet during the early Qing Dynasty.

Breaking From Orthodox Traditions

During the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), painters known as Individualists rebelled against many of the traditional rules of painting and found ways to express themselves more directly through free brushwork. While Orthodox painters such as the Six Masters focused on a style that was conservative, cautious, subtle, and complex, Individualist painters tended to produce more vigorous and vivid works of art.

The Individualist painters included Bada Shanren (1626–1705) and Shitao (1641–1707), who both drew from the revolutionary ideas of transcending tradition to achieve an original style. In this way, they were more faithfully following the way of Dong Qichang than the Orthodox School, who were considered his official direct followers.

Two Birds by Bada Shanren (1650–1705): Bada Shanren paintings feature sharp brush strokes that are attributed to the sideways manner by which he held his brush.

Painting Styles

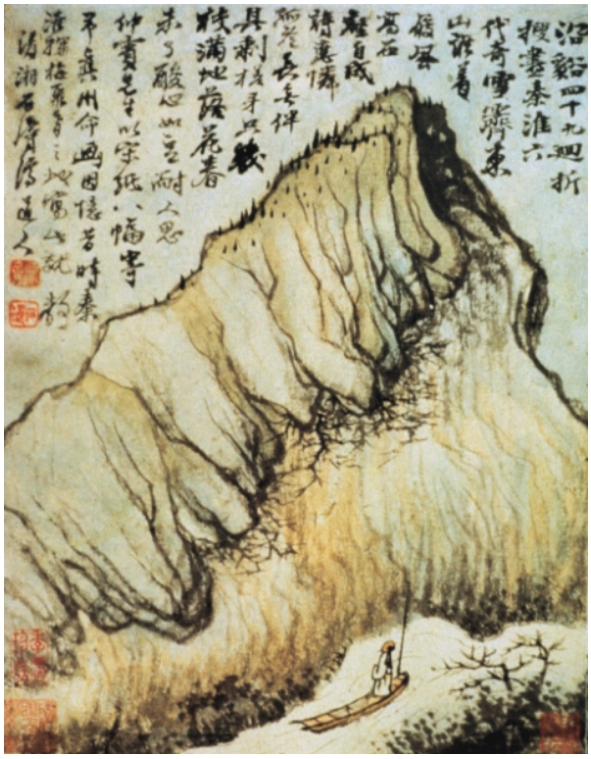
The paintings of Bada Shanren feature sharp brush strokes, which are attributed to the sideways manner by which he held his brush. The art created by Shitao was revolutionary in its transgressions of the rigidly codified techniques and styles that dictated what was considered beautiful. In his time, imitation was valued over innovation, and although Shitao was clearly influenced by his predecessors (namely Ni Zan and Li Yong), his art breaks with theirs in several new and fascinating ways.

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/53090

Pine Pavilion Near a Spring by Shitao (1675): Shitao is one of the most famous individualist painters of the early Qing Dynasty. The art he created was revolutionary in its transgressions of the rigidly codified techniques and styles that dictated what was considered beautiful.

Shitao's formal innovations in depiction include drawing attention to the act of painting itself through his use of washes and bold, impressionistic brushstrokes, as well as an interest in subjective perspective and the use of negative or white space to suggest distance. The poetry and calligraphy that accompany his landscapes are just as vivid and irreverent as the paintings they complement. His paintings exemplify the internal contradictions and tensions of the literati or scholar-amateur artist, and they have been interpreted as an invective against art-historical canonization.

Reminiscences of Qin-Huai is one of Shitao's unique paintings. Like many paintings from the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, it deals with man's place in nature. Upon first viewing, the craggy peak in this painting seems somewhat distorted. What makes this painting so unique is that, upon closer inspection, it appears to depict the mountain bowing. A monk stands placidly on a boat that floats along the Qin-Huai river, staring up in admiration at the stone giant. The economy of respect that circulates between man and nature is explored here in a sophisticated style reminiscent of surrealism or magical realism and bordering on the absurd. Shitao himself had visited the river and the surrounding region in the 1680s, but it is unknown whether the album that contains this painting depicts specific places.



Reminiscences of Qin-Huai by Shitao: Like many of the paintings from the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty, Shitao's *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai* deals with man's place in nature.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Peonies by Yun Shouping. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Peonies_by_Yun_Shouping.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Wang Hui10. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wang_Hui10.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art%23Early_Qing_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qing Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qing_Dynasty%23Arts_and_Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Six Masters of the early Qing period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Masters_of_the_early_Qing_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/four-wangs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chu Ta 003. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chu_Ta_003.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ShiTao-Pine Pavilion Near A Spring. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ShiTao-Pine_Pavilion_Near_A_Spring.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shitao-Qinhuai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shitao-Qinhuai.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shitao. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shitao. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_painting%23Late_imperial_China_.281368.E2.80.931895.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art%23Early_Qing_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bada Shanren. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bada%20Shanren. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shitao. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shitao. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qing Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Qing+Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.4: The Qing Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

12.5: Modern Chinese Painting

Modern Chinese Painting

Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries, Chinese painting evolved under the influence of the People's Republic and exposure to the West.

Learning Objectives

Describe the adoption of Western techniques in the New Culture Movement, the subsequent revival of traditional Chinese painting, and the closing of art schools during the Cultural Revolution

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Traditional painting involves the same techniques as calligraphy and is done with a brush dipped in black or colored ink. As with calligraphy, the most popular materials for paintings are paper and silk.
- Beginning with the New Culture Movement of the mid-1910s and 1920s, Chinese artists started to adopt Western techniques.
- By the early years of the People's Republic of China (formed in 1949), artists were encouraged to employ socialist realism modeled on the Soviet Union.
- This regimen was considerably relaxed in 1953, and after the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956–57, traditional Chinese painting experienced a significant revival.
- During the Cultural Revolution in 1966, art schools were closed, and the publication of art journals and major art exhibitions ceased. Following the Revolution, many art schools and professional organizations were reinstated.

Key Terms

- **New Culture Movement**: A movement during the 1910s and 1920s in China that sprang from the disillusionment with traditional Chinese culture following the failure of the Chinese Republic.
- **Hundred Flowers Campaign**: A period in 1956 in the People's Republic of China during which the Communist Party of China encouraged its citizens to openly express their opinions of the communist regime.
- **Cultural Revolution**: A social-political movement that took place in the People's Republic of China from 1966, with the goal of enforcing Communism in the country by removing capitalist, traditional, and cultural elements from Chinese society.

The Evolution of Chinese Painting

Chinese painting is one of the oldest continuous artistic traditions in the world. Painting in the traditional style is known today in Chinese as *guó huà*, meaning national or native painting, as opposed to Western styles of art that became popular in China in the 20th century. Traditional painting involves essentially the same techniques as calligraphy and is done with a brush dipped in black or colored ink (oils are not typically used). As with calligraphy, the most popular materials for paintings are paper and silk. The finished work can be mounted on scrolls, such as hanging scrolls or handscrolls . Traditional painting can also be done on album sheets, walls, lacquerware , folding screens, and other media .

Traditional Chinese wall scroll: A wall scroll painted by Ma Lin on or before 1246. Ink and color on silk, 226.6×110.3 cm.

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, Chinese painters were increasingly exposed to Western art. Some artists who studied in Europe rejected traditional forms of Chinese painting; others tried to combine the two traditions. Among the most celebrated modern painters is Qi Baishi, who began life as a poor peasant and became a great master. His best known works depict flowers and small animals.

Socialist Realism

Beginning with the New Culture Movement of the mid-1910s and 1920s, Chinese artists started to adopt Western techniques. By the early years of the People's Republic of China (formed in 1949), however, artists were encouraged to employ socialist realism. Some Soviet Union socialist realism techniques were imported without modification, and painters were assigned subjects and expected to mass -produce paintings that depicted social issues. At the same time, they were ordered to cease traditional Chinese painting.

The Hundred Flowers Campaign

This regimen was considerably relaxed in 1953 and during the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956–57. The Hundred Flowers Campaign was a period in the People's Republic of China during which the Communist Party of China encouraged its citizens to openly express their opinions of the communist regime. Following this campaign, traditional Chinese painting experienced a significant revival. Along with these developments in professional art circles, there was a proliferation of peasant art depicting everyday life in the rural areas on wall murals and in open-air painting exhibitions.

The Cultural Revolution of 1966

The Cultural Revolution was a sociopolitical movement that took place in the People's Republic of China from 1966 until 1976. Set into motion by Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the Communist Party of China, its stated goal was to preserve "true" Communist ideology in the country by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society During the Cultural Revolution in 1966. During this Revolution, art schools were closed and the publication of art journals and major art exhibitions ceased. One of the stated goals of the Cultural Revolution was to bring an end to the Four Olds—Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. Traditional themes in art were sidelined the Cultural Revolution, and artists such as Feng Zikai, Shi Lu, and Pan Tianshou were persecuted.

Some of the most enduring images of Cultural Revolution come from the poster art. Propaganda art in posters was used as a campaigning tool and mass communication device, produced in large number and widely disseminated. Such artwork often served as the main source of information for the people, used by the government to educate the public to the ideological values of the Communist state. There were many types of posters, the two main genres being the dazibao (a big character poster) and commercial propaganda poster.

Propaganda art: Red Guards on the cover of an elementary school textbook

Post-1978

Following the Cultural Revolution, many art schools and professional organizations were reinstated. Exchanges were set up with groups of foreign artists, and Chinese artists began to experiment with new subjects and techniques. One particular case of freehand

style (xieyi hua) may be noted in the work of the child prodigy Wang Yani, born in 1975, who started painting at age 3 and has since considerably contributed to the exercise of the style in contemporary artwork.

After Chinese economic reform, more and more artists boldly conducted innovations in Chinese Painting. New brush skills were developed, such as vertical direction splash water and ink as seen in the work of artist Tiancheng Xie. New styles were created by integrating traditional Chinese and Western painting techniques, such as Heaven Style Painting as exemplified by artist Shaoqiang Chen. According to points of view by artists, art institutes, publications, and media, the Heaven Style painting was derived based on painting techniques from the Song Dynasty (960–1279) and Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) and integrated techniques of perspective science and contemporary photography. New styles also expressed contemporary themes with typical nature scenes of certain regions, such as the Lijiang Painting Style and the work of artist Gesheng Huang.

Elegance of the Lotus Looking from Heaven, by Shaoqiang Chen, Chinese Ink and Watercolor on Rice Paper: Shaoqiang Chen created a new style of Chinese painting in the 21st century known as Heaven Style painting.

Until recently, art exhibitions deemed controversial have been routinely shut down by police, and performance artists in particular faced the threat of arrest in the early 1990s. More recently, there has been greater tolerance by the Chinese government, though many internationally acclaimed artists are still restricted from media exposure at home or have exhibitions ordered closed.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 1024px-Red_Guards.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Revolution#/media/File:Red_Guards.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ma Lin 010. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ma_Lin_010.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1920px-Elegance_of_Lotus_Looking_from_Heaven.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven_Style_Painting#/media/File:Elegance_of_Lotus_Looking_from_Heaven.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_painting%23Late_imperial_China_.281368.E2.80.931895.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New Culture Movement. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New%20Culture%20Movement. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hundred Flowers Campaign. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred%20Flowers%20Campaign. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cultural Revolution. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural%20Revolution. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Heaven Style Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven_Style_Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.5: Modern Chinese Painting is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/53091

12.6: Korea- The Joseon Dynasty

Joseon Ceramics

Korea's Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) is considered the golden age of Korean pottery.

Learning Objectives

Identify the Ming, Confucian, and Buddhist influences on pottery created during Korea's Joseon Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During Korea's Joseon Dynasty , ceramic wares were considered to represent the highest quality of achievement from imperial, city, and provincial kilns , the last of which were export-driven wares.
- Wares evolved along Chinese lines in terms of color, shape, and technique, and the Ming influence in blue and white wares using cobalt blue glazes was evident in a great deal of Joseon pottery.
- Buddhist designs such as lotus flowers and willow trees prevailed in celadon wares. The form most often seen was that of pear-shaped bottles; also notable were thinner glazes and colorless glazes for buncheong or stoneware.
- The rise of white porcelain occurred as a result of Confucian influence and ideals, resulting in purer, less pretentious forms lacking artifice and complexity.

Key Terms

- **Joseon Dynasty**: Korean dynasty lasting from 1392 to 1910.

Overview: The Joseon Dynasty

During Korea's Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910, often referred to as "Choson"), ceramic wares were considered to represent the highest quality of achievement from imperial, city, and provincial kilns, the last of which were export-driven wares. This era marked the golden age of Korean pottery, with a long period of growth in imperial and provincial kilns and much work of the highest quality still preserved today. Generally, the ceramics of this dynasty are divided into the early period (roughly 1300–1500), middle period (1500–1700), and late period (1700–1910).

Early Period

In the early period, wares were evolved alongside Chinese lines in terms of color, shape, and technique. Celadon, white porcelain, and storage pottery were similar but with slight variations in glazes, incision designs, florality, and weight. The influence of the Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) in blue and white wares using cobalt blue glazes could be seen in Joseon pottery, but Joseon work tended to lack the phthalo blue range and the three-dimensional glassine color depth of Ming Dynasty Chinese works. Ceramics from the Joseon period differed from other periods because artists felt that each piece of art deserved its own uniquely cultivated personality.

Simplified designs emerged early on during the Joseon Dynasty. Buddhist designs such as lotus flowers and willow trees prevailed in celadon wares. The form most often seen was that of pear-shaped bottles; also notable were thinner glazes and colorless glazes for buncheong or stoneware.

Joseon Dynasty pottery, Korea. Dongguk University Museum, Seoul: This blue and white porcelain jar with pine and bamboo designs was made in 1489 during the early Joseon Dynasty.

Middle Period

The middle period was marked by the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592, during which entire villages of Korean potters were forcibly relocated to Japan. This had a permanent effect on the pottery industry in Korea, as craftsmen had to relearn techniques after the masters were gone. This era also saw the prolonged fall of the Chinese Ming Dynasty in 1644, after which immigration of some Chinese master potters occurred in southern coastal Korea. Qing coloring, brighter and almost Scythian in enamel imitation, was rejected by Korean potters in favor of simpler, less decorated wares in keeping with a new dynasty that built itself on military tradition.

Joseon white porcelain vase: White porcelains were preferred and praised more than any other porcelains during the Joseon period.

Late Period

The late period was characterized by the establishment of government-subsidized kilns at Bunwon-ri, Gwangju near Seoul in 1751, as well as the privatization of Bunwon in 1884. Joseon white porcelains became especially popular during this time and are characterized by unpretentious forms, understated decoration, and subtle use of color, reflecting the ideals of the Korean Confucian state. Over time, the wares began to assume more traditional Korean glazes and more specific designs to meet regional needs. The rise of white porcelain occurred as a result of Confucian influence and ideals, resulting in purer, less pretentious forms lacking artifice and complexity.

White porcelain jar, 18th century, Korea: The rise of white porcelain occurred as a result of Confucian influence and ideals, resulting in purer, less pretentious forms lacking artifice and complexity.

Joseon Painting

The art of the Joseon period was influenced by both Confucianism and Buddhism and has left a substantial legacy on Korean art.

Learning Objectives

Outline the evolution of Korean painting throughout the Joseon Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The influence of Confucianism superseded that of Buddhism in the Joseon period; however, Buddhist elements remained and Buddhist art continued.
- Buddhist iconography (such as images of bamboo, orchids, plums, chrysanthemums, and the familiar knotted good luck symbols) continued to play a large role in genre paintings.
- Mid-Joseon painting styles moved towards increased realism , and a national painting style of landscapes called “true view” emerged, evolving from the traditional Chinese style of idealized general landscapes to particular locations exactly rendered.
- The mid-to-late Joseon Dynasty is considered the golden age of Korean painting. It coincides with the collapse of the Ming Dynasty , the accession of the Manchu emperors in China, and Korean artists being forced to build new artistic models based on an inner search for particular Korean subjects.

Key Terms

- **Buddhism**: The religion and philosophy founded by the Indian teacher Gautama Buddha.
- **Confucianism**: A Chinese ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucious.

Overview: Art of the Joseon Dynasty

The Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) has left a substantial legacy on modern Korea. Much of modern Korean artwork—as well as etiquette, cultural norms, societal attitudes towards current issues, and the modern Korean language and its dialects—are derived from the culture and traditions of the Joseon era. During this period, the influence of Confucianism superseded that of Buddhism. Buddhist elements remained, however, and Buddhist art itself continued. Buddhist art was encouraged not by the imperial centers of art or the accepted taste of the Joseon Dynasty publicly, but in private homes and in the summer palaces of the Joseon Dynasty kings. The simplicity of Buddhist art was given great appreciation but was not seen as citified art.

Early Period

While the Joseon Dynasty began under military auspices, styles from the earlier Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) were left to evolve, and Buddhist iconography (such as images of bamboo, orchids, plums, chrysanthemums, and the familiar knotted good luck symbols) continued to play a large role in genre paintings. Neither colors nor forms underwent real change, and Joseon rulers stood aside from making any edicts on art. Chinese Ming ideals and imported techniques continued to influence early Joseon Dynasty works.

Early Joseon landscape painting by Seo Munbo in the late 15th century: Early Joseon paintings often followed the Chinese style of idealized general landscapes.

Middle Period

Beginning in the mid-Joseon era, painting styles moved toward increased realism. A national painting style of landscapes called “true view” began, moving from the traditional Chinese style of idealized general landscapes to exactly rendered particular locations. While not photographic, the style was academic enough to become established and supported as a standardized style in Korean painting.

Arahat, Joseon Buddhist painting in 16th century Korea: Although the influence of Confucianism superseded that of Buddhism during the Joseon Dynasty, Buddhist art itself continued.

Late Period

The mid-to-late Joseon Dynasty is considered the golden age of Korean painting. It coincides with the shock from the collapse of the Chinese Ming Dynasty (1644), the accession of the Manchu emperors in China, and Korean artists being forced to build new artistic models based on an inner search for particular Korean subjects. At this time, China ceased to have a preeminent influence in Korean art, and painting in Korea took its own course , becoming increasingly distinctive from traditional Chinese painting. Paintings from this era also showed increasing influence from the West.

Joseon Dynasty painting by Owon: Owon was the pen name for Jang Seung-eop (1843–1897), a painter of the late Joseon Dynasty in Korea. He was one of the few painters to hold a position of rank in the Joseon court.

A late Joseon painting: This painting from the late Joseon period—considered the golden age of Korean painting—shows some influences of the Western painting techniques introduced to Joseon.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Baekja-White Ceramic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Baekja-White_Ceramic.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Joseon white porcelain jar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Joseon_white_porcelain_jar.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseon_Blue_and_white_porcelain_jar_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_pottery_and_porcelain#/media/File:Joseon_Blue_and_white_porcelain_jar_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Joseon white porcelain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseon_white_porcelain. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseon dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseon_dynasty%23Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean ceramics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_ceramics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseon Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseon%20Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-%EC%84%9C%EB%AC%B8%EB%B3%B4_%EC%82%B0%EC%88%98%EB%8F%84%28%E5%B1%B1%E6%B0%B4%E5%9C%96%29_15%EC%84%B8%EA%B8%B0.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_painting#/media/File:%EC%84%9C%EB%AC%B8%EB%B3%B4_%EC%82%B0%EC%88%98%EB%8F%84(%E5%B1%B1%E6%B0%B4%E5%9C%96)_15%EC%84%B8%EA%B8%B0.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- %EB%82%98%ED%95%9C%EB%8F%84%28%E7%BE%85%E6%BC%A2%E5%9C%96%29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_painting#/media/File:%EB%82%98%ED%95%9C%EB%8F%84(%E7%BE%85%E6%BC%A2%E5%9C%96).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Maenggyondo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maenggyondo.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Owoncat. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Owoncat.gif. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Korean painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Buddhism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Confucianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.6: Korea- The Joseon Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

12.7: Modern Korean Art

Modern Korean Art

Modern Korean art is influenced by its historical roots, its recent tumultuous history, and various forms of Western art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the development of Korean art over the 20th and 21st centuries

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- From the 1880s onward, the Japanese invasion of Korea had a significant impact on Korean art. Works of art were looted and destroyed, schools of art were closed, and Korean styles were replaced with paintings of Japanese subjects in Japanese styles.
- In modern Korea, works in metal, jade , bamboo, and textiles have had a limited resurgence, as seen in Korean fabric and paper arts.
- Korean paper art includes all manner of handmade paper (hanji) used for architectural purposes, printing, artwork, and the Korean folded arts, and as well for Korean paper clothing, which has an annual fashion show in the city of Jeonju, attracting world attention.
- Contemporary Korean painting often resembles the textures and glazes of pottery and emphasizes the importance of brushstrokes.
- Manhwa , or Korean comics, were inspired by classic Asian arts and have been influenced by the dramatic modern history of Korea, resulting in a diversity of forms and genres .
- Art in North Korea is influenced by the country's political history and is characterized by patriotism and revolutionary images.

Key Terms

- **Manhwa**: The general Korean term for comics and print cartoons.
- **lithography**: The process of etching an image onto a flat surface, then copying the etched surface by applying ink (or the equivalent) to it and pressing another material against it.
- **Suh Yongsun**: A contemporary South Korean painter and sculptor.

Overview

Modern Korean art is influenced by its historical roots (including early Korean shamanist art, Korean Buddhist art, and Korean Confucian art) and its recent tumultuous history, as well as various forms of Western art in the 20th century. From the 1880s onward, the Japanese invasion of Korea had a significant impact on Korean art. Works of art were looted and destroyed, schools of art were closed, and Korean styles were replaced with paintings of Japanese subjects in Japanese styles. In 1945, Korea was freed from Japan, and new and contemporary styles of art have emerged since then.

South Korea

In modern Korea, works in metal, jade, bamboo, and textiles have had a limited resurgence. The South Korean government has tried to encourage the maintenance of cultural continuity through awards and scholarships for younger students in rarer Korean art forms.

Fabric and Paper Arts

Korean fabric arts have a long history and include many art forms such as embroidery (used in costumes and screenwork), knots (best represented in the work of Choe Eun-sun and used in costumes and as wall-decorations), and lesser-known weaving skills as indicated in rarer arts.

Korean paper art includes all manner of handmade paper (hanji), which is used for architectural purposes (such as window screens and floor covering), printing, artwork, the Korean folded arts (such as paper fans and figures), and Korean paper clothing. Contemporary paper artists are very active, and the art of Korean paper clothing has an annual fashion show in the city of Jeonju, attracting world attention.

Korean paper arts: This image shows colorful hanji strings next to a box of Korean fans.

Painting and Calligraphy

Contemporary Korean painting demands an understanding of Korean ceramics and pottery. The glazes and textures of Korean paintings make them more similar to the tradition of ceramic art than of western painterly traditions, even if many of the subjects appear to be of Western origin. Brushstrokes are also far more important than they are to the Western artist; paintings are judged on brushstrokes more often than pure technique. Korean calligraphy is seen as an art where brushstrokes reveal the artist's personality, enhancing the subject matter that is painted.

Major 20th century Korean artists include Park Su-geun, Nam June Paik , Chang Ucchin, and Seund Ja Rhee. A new wave of Korean art includes the work of Lee Dong Youb and Suh Yongsun , while 21st century Korean artists include Amy Sol, David Choe, Seonna Hong, Tschoon Su Kim, and Junggeun Oh. Suh Yongsun was elected "Korea's artist of the year 2009" and makes paintings with heavy brushstrokes of subjects from both Korean history and urban scenes of Western cities, such as New York and Berlin. His artwork is a good example of the combination of Korean and Western subjects and painting styles.

Pre-Bell-Man, statue in front of the Museum für Kommunikation, Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Nam June Paik (July 20, 1932–January 29, 2006) was a Korean American artist who worked with a variety of media. He is considered to be the first video artist.

Manhwa

Manhwa is the general Korean term for comics and print cartoons . Outside of Korea, the term usually refers specifically to South Korean comics. The term, along with *manga*, is a cognate of the Chinese *manhua*. Manhwa were inspired by classic Asian arts, especially Chinese, and have been influenced by the dramatic modern history of Korea, resulting in a diversity of forms and genres. Distinctive manhwa can be found in editorial comic strips, artistically-oriented works, and webcomic serials.

The first woodcut manhwa by an unidentified painter, printed in Gamgak Nodong Yahak Dokbon in 1908: Manhwa, or Korean comics, were inspired by classic Asian arts and have been influenced by the dramatic modern history of Korea. In this cartoon, an Adviser of Workers' Evening School Council says "Hello, we have to work for our country and people have to learn." The worker then replies, "Yes, thanks. I will do that. "

North Korea Art

During Kim Il-sung's rule in the north, painting was allowed only in the socialist realist genre, and propaganda posters were the stock of North Korean visual arts. Changing political systems from Communism merging with the old *yangban* class of Korean nationalistic leaders brought about a different kind of visual arts that is quite distinctive from the socialist realism common to other Communist art. This is particularly seen in the patriotic films that dominated the culture from 1949 to 1994, as well as the reawakened architecture, calligraphy, fabric work, and neo-traditional painting from 1994 to today. The impact of this influence can be seen on revolutionary posters, lithography and multiples, dramatic and documentary films, realistic paintings, and grand architecture; it can also been seen to a lesser extent in areas of domestic pottery, ceramics, exportable needlework, and the visual crafts. Sports art and politically-charged revolutionary posters have been the most sophisticated and are internationally collected by auction houses and specialty collectors.

After Kim Il-sung's death in 1994, directives on painting were relaxed and sometimes completely abolished under Kim Jong-il. New art forms, including a kind of impressionism specific to North Korea, rose to complement posters. The particularities of North Korean communism have reinvigorated old subjects and techniques with a nationalist dimension .

An artist of the Mansudae Art Studio paints a tiger. : The particularities of North Korean communism have reinvigorated old subjects and techniques with a nationalist dimension.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Manhwa-Yu.Gil-jun-Yahak-01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Manhwa-Yu.Gil-jun-Yahak-01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Korean_paper-Hanji-01.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_paper#/media/File:Korean_paper-Hanji-01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-Artist_at_Mansudae_Art_Studio%2C_Pyongyang_%2810104200854%29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art#/media/File:Artist_at_Mansudae_Art_Studio,_Pyongyang_(10104200854).jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Frankfurt Medien Denkmal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Frankfurt_Medien_Denkmal.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Korean painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean comics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_comics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Suh Yongsun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Suh%20Yongsun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/lithography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Manhwa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhwa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 12.7: Modern Korean Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Japan Before 1333 CE

13.1: Prehistoric Japan

13.2: Buddhist Art in Japan

13.3: The Heian Period

13.4: The Kamakura Period

This page titled 13: Japan Before 1333 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

13.1: Prehistoric Japan

Ceramics in the Jomon Period

Pottery from the prehistoric Jōmon period in Japan is thought by many scholars to be the oldest ever discovered.

Learning Objectives

Describe the pottery of the Jomon people in prehistoric Japan

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Prehistoric art of Japan begins with the Jōmon period (c. 10,000 BCE – 350 BCE), and the Jōmon people are thought to have been the first settlers of Japan. The Jōmon people are named for the "cord-markings," or decorative impressions made with rope, found on pottery of this era.
- Jōmon pottery is said by many scholars to be the oldest ever discovered.
- In the Middle Jōmon period (3000-2000 BCE), simple decorations on the pottery gave way to highly elaborate designs; flame vessels and crown-formed vessels are among the most distinctive forms from this period.
- Clay figurines called dogū , often described as "goggle-eyed," featured elaborate geometrical designs and short, stubby limbs; they are believed to have a religious or ritual significance.

Key Terms

- **cord-markings**: Impressions made with rope, found as decorations on pottery of the Jōmon period.
- **dogū**: Clay figurines crafted by the Jōmon people of ancient Japan.

Overview: Prehistoric Japan

Prehistoric art of Japan begins with the Jōmon period (c. 10,000 BCE – 350 BCE). The Jōmon people are thought to have been the first settlers of Japan. Nomadic hunter-gatherers who later practiced organized farming and built cities, the Jōmon people are named for the "cord-markings"—impressions made by pressing rope into the clay before it was heated to approximately 600-900 degrees Celsius—that were found as decorations on pottery of this time. The term Jōmon was first applied to the pottery and the culture by American Edward Sylvester Morse. Jōmon pottery is said by many scholars to be the oldest ever discovered.

Jōmon People and Their Art

The Jōmon communities consisted of hundreds or even thousands of people who dwelt in simple houses of wood and thatch set into shallow earthen pits to provide warmth from the soil. They crafted lavishly decorated pottery storage vessels, clay figurines called *dogū*, and crystal jewels.

Pottery Vessels

The oldest examples of Jōmon pottery have flat bottoms, though pointed bottoms (meant to be held in small pits in the earth) became common later. In the Middle Jōmon period (3000-2000 BCE), simple decorations on the pottery (created with cord or through scratching) gave way to highly elaborate designs. So-called flame vessels, along with the closely related crown-formed vessels, are among the most distinctive forms from this period.

Crown-formed vessel from middle Jōmon period (3000-2000 BCE): “Crown-formed vessel,” a variation on the flame vessel style for which Jōmon art is famous.

Dogū

Representative forms such as clay figurines of people and animals also appeared around this time. These figurines, called *dogū*, are often described as “goggle-eyed” and feature elaborate geometrical designs and short, stubby limbs. They are believed to have borne a religious or ritual significance.

A Final Jōmon Statuette (1000-400 BCE): An example of Jōmon dogū.

Ceramics and Bronze in the Yayoi Period

Artifacts brought to the Japanese islands by the Yayoi people bore Chinese and Korean influences and ushered Japan into the Iron Age.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how Chinese expansion under the Qin and Han Dynasties contributed to migrations to the Japanese archipelago during the Yayoi period.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Yayoi people arrived in Japan around 350-300 BCE, bringing knowledge of wetland rice cultivation, the manufacture of copper weapons and bronze bells, and wheel-thrown, kiln-fired ceramics .
- Artifacts brought to the islands at this time had a powerful effect upon the development of Japanese art by presenting objects to imitate and copy, such as bronze mirrors and swords in the Chinese and Korean styles .
- Yayoi period pottery tends to be smoother than that of the earlier Jōmon period and more frequently features decorations made with sticks or combs rather than rope.
- Three major symbols of Yayoi culture include the bronze mirror, the bronze sword, and the royal seal stone. Yayoi craft specialists also made bronze ceremonial bells, known as dōtaku .

Key Terms

- **Iron Age**: A level of culture in which man used iron and the technology of iron production.
- **dōtaku**: Ceremonial bronze bells of the Yayoi people in Japan.
- **Qin and Han**: The name of respective Chinese dynasties: Qin (221-206 BCE) and Han (206-220 CE)

Overview: The Yayoi People

The Yayoi period is an Iron Age era in the history of Japan traditionally dated 300 BCE to 300 CE. It is named after the neighborhood of Tokyo where archaeologists first uncovered artifacts and features from that era. Distinguishing characteristics of the Yayoi period include the appearance of new Yayoi pottery styles, the start of intensive rice agriculture in paddy fields, and a

hierarchical class structure. Techniques in metallurgy based on the use of bronze and iron were also introduced to Japan in this period.

The Yayoi followed the Jōmon period (13,000–400 BCE), and Yayoi culture flourished in a geographic area from southern Kyūshū to northern Honshū. Archaeological evidence supports the idea that during this time, an influx of farmers from the Asian continent to Japan (known now as the Yayoi people) absorbed or overwhelmed the native hunter-gatherer population. Chinese expansion under the Qin (221-206 BCE) and Han (206-220 CE) Dynasties is said to have been a primary impetus for migration to the Japanese archipelago .

Influence on Art

The Yayoi brought their knowledge of wetland rice cultivation, the manufacture of copper weapons and bronze bells (dōtaku), and wheel-thrown, kiln-fired ceramics. Along with introducing bronze casting and other technologies into the islands, the Yayoi people brought cultural influences from China and Korea. Their artifacts had a powerful effect on the development of Japanese art by presenting objects to imitate and copy, such as bronze mirrors and swords in the Chinese and Korean styles.

Yayoi pottery was simply decorated and is thought to have been produced on a potter’s wheel, as opposed to poetry from the earlier Jōmon period which was produced by hand. Pottery from the Yayoi period also tends to be smoother than that of the Jōmon period and more frequently features decorations made with sticks or combs rather than rope. Yayoi pottery, burial mounds, and food preservation have been discovered to be very similar to the pottery of southern Korea, suggesting the Yayoi people originated in the Korean peninsula; some pieces of Yayoi pottery also clearly show the influence of Jōmon ceramics.

Yayoi art: A jar from the Yayoi period (1st – 3rd century CE)

Chinese influence on the Yayoi culture can be seen in the bronze and copper weapons and other objects of the Yayoi people, as well as irrigated paddy rice cultivation. Three major symbols of Yayoi culture include the bronze mirror, the bronze sword, and the royal seal stone. Yayoi craft specialists also made bronze ceremonial bells known as dōtaku. By the 1st century CE, Yayoi farmers began using iron agricultural tools and weapons.

A Yayoi period dōtaku bell, 3rd century CE: Yayoi craft specialists made bronze ceremonial bells known as dōtaku.

Grave Goods in the Kofun Period

The Kofun period is the oldest era of recorded history in Japan, characterized by its earthen burial mounds.

Learning Objectives

Locate the Kofun Period within Japan's history of contact with China and the introduction of Buddhism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Kofun period from 250 to 538 CE is the oldest era of recorded history in Japan. It is characterized by the Shinto culture that existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism .
- During the Kofun period, the leader of a powerful clan won control over much of west Honshū and the northern half of Kyūshū, eventually establishing the Imperial House of Japan.
- The word *kofun* is Japanese for the type of burial mounds dating from this era, whose size reflected the power and influence of the ruling classes.
- The mounds contained large stone burial chambers and some were surrounded by moats. Unglazed pottery figures called Haniwa were often buried under the circumference of the kofun.
- Kofun come in many shapes, but round and square are most common. A distinct style is the keyhole-shaped kofun with its square front and round back. Kofun range in size from several meters to over 400 meters in length.

Key Terms

- **Shinto**: The indigenous spirituality of the people of Japan.
- **Buddhism**: The religion and philosophy founded by the Indian teacher Gautama Buddha.
- **kofun**: The name of the earliest recorded period in Japanese history, named for the type of burial mounds dating from this era.

Overview: The Kofun Period

The Kofun period is the oldest era of recorded history in Japan, dating from around 250 to 538 CE. It followed the Yayoi period in Japanese history; the Kofun and the subsequent Asuka periods are sometimes referred to collectively as the Yamato period. The word *kofun* is Japanese for the type of burial mounds dating to this era. The close of the Kofun period saw the introduction of the Chinese system of writing as well as the widespread adoption of Buddhism.

Megalithic Tomb from the Kofun Period: Daisen Kofun, the largest of the earthen burial mounds from the Kofun period in Japan.

Kofun Culture

The Kofun period is distinguished from the following Asuka period by several cultural elements.The Kofun period is characterized by the Shinto culture that existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism. Politically, the leader of a powerful clan won control over much of west Honshū and the northern half of Kyūshū, d eventually establishing the Imperial House of Japan. Kofun burial mounds on Tanegashima and two very old Shinto shrines on Yakushima suggest that these islands were the southern boundaries of the Yamato state. Its northernmost extent was as far north as Tainai in the modern Niigata Prefecture, where mounds associated with a person linked to the Yamato kingdom have been located.

Kofun Burial Mounds

Kofun (from Middle Chinese kú, meaning “ancient”, and bjun, meaning “burial mound”) are the burial mounds built for the people of the ruling class during the 3rd to 7th centuries in Japan. The Kofun period takes its name from these distinctive earthen mounds, which contained large stone burial chambers. Some were surrounded by moats.

Kofun come in many shapes, but most commonly round and square. A distinct style is the keyhole-shaped kofun, with its square front and round back. Kofun range in size from several meters to over 400 meters in length, and unglazed pottery figures called Haniwa were often buried under the circumference of the structures.

The oldest Japanese kofun is Hokenoyama Kofun located in Sakurai, Nara , which dates to the late 3rd century. In the Makimuku district of Sakurai, later keyhole kofuns (including Hashihaka Kofun and Shibuya Mukaiyama Kofun) were built around the early 4th century. The trend of the keyhole kofun first spread from Yamato to Kawachi (where very large kofun such as Daisenryō Kofun exist) and then throughout the country (with the exception of the Tōhoku region) in the 5th century. Keyhole kofun disappeared later in the 6th century, probably because of the drastic reformation which took place in the Yamato court; records suggest the introduction of Buddhism at this time. The last two great kofun are the Imashirozuka Kofun of Osaka, which is believed by current scholars to be the tomb of Emperor Keitai, and the Ikatoyama Kofun of Fukuoka, recorded in Fudoki of Chikugo to be the tomb of Iwai, the political archrival of Keitai.

Aerial Photo of Notable Kofun Group: The Furuichi kofun group in Osaka.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Oukangatadoki. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oukangatadoki.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese Prehistoric Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Prehistoric_Art. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Japanese Prehistoric Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Prehistoric_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- cord-markings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/cord-markings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- dogu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/dogu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-DotakuBronzeBellLateYayoi3rdCenturyCE.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yayoi_period#/media/File:DotakuBronzeBellLateYayoi3rdCenturyCE.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- YayoiJar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:YayoiJar.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Yayoi Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yayoi_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese Prehistoric Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Prehistoric_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- dotaku. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/dotaku. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin and Han. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin%20and%20Han. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iron Age. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Iron_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Furuichi kofun group. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Furuichi_kofun_group.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- NintokuTomb. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NintokuTomb.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kofun period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofun_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shinto. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Buddhism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kofun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/kofun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 13.1: Prehistoric Japan is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

13.2: Buddhist Art in Japan

Japanese Buddhism

The introduction of Buddhism to Japan resulted in the creation of temples, monasteries, paintings, and sculptures of extraordinary artistic achievement.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline of the introduction of Buddhism and the development of Buddhist art in Japan from the 6th through the 16th centuries

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Before the introduction of Buddhism , Japan was already the seat of various cultural and artistic influences.
- The Japanese were introduced to Buddhism in the 6th century, when missionary monks traveled to the islands with numerous scriptures and works of art. The Buddhist religion was adopted by the state in the following century.
- Countless paintings and sculptures were made, often under governmental sponsorship. Indian, Hellenistic , Chinese, and Korean artistic influences blended into an original style characterized by realism and grace.
- Japan developed extremely rich figurative art for the pantheon of Buddhist deities , sometimes combined with Hindu and Shinto influences.
- Zen art developed in the 12th and 13th centuries and reached its apogee in the Muromachi Period (1337 – 1573) following the introduction of the faith by Dogen and Eisai upon their return from China.

Key Terms

- **Dōgen Zenji**: (1200 – 1253) A Japanese Zen Buddhist teacher born in Kyōto who founded the Sōtō school of Zen in Japan after travelling to China.
- **Zen**: A philosophy of calm associated with the Buddhist denomination.
- **Silk Road**: An extensive interconnected network of trade routes across Asia, North and Northeast Africa, and Europe, historically used by silk traders.
- **Myōan Eisai**: (1141 – 1215) A Japanese Buddhist priest credited with bringing the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism and green tea from China to Japan.
- **haniwa**: Terracotta clay figures made for ritual use and buried with the dead during the Kofun period (3rd to 6th century CE) of Japanese history.

Buddhism Reaches Japan

Before the introduction of Buddhism, Japan was already the seat of various cultural and artistic influences, from the abstract linear decorative art of the indigenous Neolithic Jōmon (10500 BCE to 300 BCE), to the pottery and bronze of the Yayoi period and the Haniwa art (terracotta clay figures used as funereal objects) of the Kofun period. The Japanese were introduced to Buddhism in the 6th century CE, when missionary monks traveled to the islands with numerous scriptures and works of art. The Buddhist religion was adopted by the state in the following century. Located geographically at the end of the network of trade routes through Asian, Africa, and Europe known as the Silk Road , Japan was able to preserve many aspects of Buddhism while it was simultaneously disappearing in India and being suppressed in Central Asia and China.

Buddhist Art

From 711 BCE, numerous temples and monasteries were built in the capital city of Nara , including a five-story pagoda , the Golden Hall of the Horyuji, and the Kōfuku-ji temple. Countless paintings and sculptures were made, often under government sponsorship. Indian, Hellenistic, Chinese, and Korean artistic influences blended into an original style characterized by its realism and grace.

Kōfuku-ji: Five-story pagoda and Tōkondō.

The creation of Japanese Buddhist art was especially fertile between the 8th and 13th centuries during the periods of Nara, Heian, and Kamakura. Japan developed extremely rich figurative art for the pantheon of Buddhist deities, sometimes combined with Hindu and Shinto influences. This art tends to be very varied, creative, and bold.

The Asura in Kōfuku-ji, Nara (734): A sculpture of an Asura, a type of supernatural being in traditional Buddhist cosmology.

Zen Art

From the 12th and 13th centuries, art in Japan further developed through the introduction of Zen art, which reached its apogee in the Muromachi Period (1337 – 1573) following the introduction of Zen Buddhism by Dōgen Zenji and Myōan Eisai upon their return from China. Zen art is primarily characterized by original paintings (such as sumi-e) and poetry (especially haiku) that strive to express the true essence of the world through impressionistic and unadorned representations. The search for enlightenment in the moment also led to the development of other important derivative arts in Japan, such as the Chanoyu tea ceremony and the Ikebana art of flower arrangement. This evolution considers almost any human activity with a strong spiritual and aesthetic content as art, including activities related to combat techniques such as martial arts.

Horyuji Temple

The Hōryū-ji Temple, one of the most celebrated Japanese temples, reflects the spread of Buddhism and Chinese culture in Japan.

Learning Objectives

Describe the creation, function, and characteristics of Prince Shōtoku's Hōryū-ji temple.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Hōryū-ji Temple embraces architectural influences ranging from the Eastern Han to the Northern Wei of China, as well as from the Three Kingdoms of Korea, particularly those of Baekje.
- The temple was originally commissioned by Prince Shōtoku of the Asuka Period (c. 538 to 710 CE) and was dedicated to Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of healing, in honor of the prince's father.
- The original temple is believed to have been completed by 607 CE; after it was destroyed in 670, the temple was reconstructed but slightly reoriented in a northwest position around the year 711.
- The current temple is made up of two areas: the Sai-in in the west and the Tō-in in the east.
- The western part of the temple contains the Kondō (sanctuary hall) and a five-story pagoda . The Tō-in area holds the octagonal Yumedono Hall (also known as the Hall of Dreams).

Key Terms

- **Prince Shōtoku**: (February 7, 574 – April 8, 622) A semi-legendary regent and politician of the Asuka period in Japan who served under Empress Suiko and commissioned the celebrated Hōryū-ji Temple.
- **Kondō**: Usually the main hall of a Buddhist temple (literally "golden hall"), which started to be used during the Asuka and Nara periods.
- **pagoda**: An Asian religious building, especially a multistory Buddhist tower, erected as a shrine or temple.

Hōryū-ji is one of the most celebrated temples in Japan, originally commissioned by Prince Shōtoku of the Asuka Period (c. 538 to 710 CE). It was originally called Ikaruga-dera (斑), a name that is still sometimes used. This first temple was completed around 607 CE. Hōryū-ji was dedicated to Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of healing, in honor of the prince's father. The original temple, named by modern historians and archaeologists Wakakusa-garan (若), was lost to fire after a lightning strike in 670. The temple was reconstructed but slightly reoriented in a northwest position around 711.

Characteristics of Hōryū-ji Temple

The reconstructed buildings embrace architectural influences ranging from the Eastern Han to the Northern Wei of China, as well as from the Three Kingdoms of Korea, particularly the Baekje Kingdom. With its origin dating back to early 7th century, the reconstruction has allowed Hōryū-ji to absorb and feature early Asuka period elements along with distinct elements only seen in Hōryū-ji, which were absent from the architecture of the following Nara period.

The current temple is made up of two areas: the Sai-in in the west and the Tō-in in the east. The western part of the temple contains the Kondō (sanctuary hall) and a five-story pagoda. The Tō-in area holds the octagonal Yumedono Hall (also known as the Hall of Dreams) and sits 122 meters east of the Sai-in area. The complex also contains monk's quarters, lecture halls, libraries, and dining halls.

Distinguishing Features

Certain features distinguish the precinct of Hōryu-ji from similar temple architecture. While most Japanese temples of the period were arranged like their Chinese and Korean prototypes—with the main gate, a pagoda, the main hall, and the lecture hall all in a straight line—the reconstructed Hōryū-ji breaks from those patterns by arranging the Kondō (main hall) and pagoda side-by side in the courtyard.

Excavations at Yamada-dera, a lost temple dating back to 643, revealed corridors with thick horizontal poles placed in the windows at narrow intervals. By contrast, those at Hōryū-ji are thinner and placed at larger intervals.

Major Asuka- style characteristics seen in Hōryu-ji and resembling designs found in the Yungang Grottoes (from the Northern Wei in China) include the railings decorated with a swastika pattern and the cved reentasis columns . Another notable Asuka-style element found only in Japan and with the only surviving originals in Hōryu-ji is the cloud-shape hybrid bracket supporter. These Asuka characteristics are not seen in later Nara period temples.

Five-Story Pagoda

The five-story pagoda, located in the Sai-in area and standing at 32.45 meters (122 feet), is one of the oldest wooden buildings in the world. The wood used in the pagoda's center pillar is estimated through a dendrochronological analysis to have been felled in 594. The central pillar rests three meters below the surface of the massive foundation stone, stretching into the ground . At its base is enshrined what is believed to be a fragment of one of Buddha's bones. Around it, four sculpted scenes from the life of the Buddha face north, east, south, and west. Although the pagoda is five-storied, it is not designed for visitors to climb inside but rather is designed to inspire people with its external view.

Hōryū-ji pagoda: The five-storied pagoda has certain characteristics unique to Hōryū-ji.

Kondō

The kondō, located side-by-side to the pagoda in Sai-in, is another one of the oldest wood buildings in existence. The hall measures 18.5 meters by 15.2 meters and has two stories, with roofs curved in the corners. Only the first story has a double roof; this was added later in the Nara period, with extra posts to hold up original first roof because it extended more than four meters past the building. The hall holds the famous Shaka Triad, bronze Yakushi and Amida Nyorai statues, and other national treasures .

The kondō of Hōryū-ji: The two-storied kondō is another of the oldest wood buildings in existence.

Yumedono

Yumedono, or the Hall of Dreams, is one of the main constructions in the Tō-in area, built on the ground which was once Prince Shōtoku's private palace, Ikaruga no miya. The present incarnation of this hall was built in 739 with the purpose of assuaging the Prince's spirit. The hall acquired its present-day common name in the later Heian period, after a legend that says a Buddha arrived as Prince Shōtoku and meditated in a hall that existed here.

Yumedono, Hall of Dreams: Yumedono, a hall associated with Prince Shōtoku.

The Todaiji

The Tōdaiji is the most ambitious Buddhist temple complex of the Nara period in Japan.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the "golden age" of art during the Nara Period, including temple-building such as the Tōdai-ji.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Nara period in Japan (710 – 784 CE) marked the emergence of a strong Japanese state and is often portrayed as a golden age for art.
- The cultural flowering during the Nara period was spawned by the transmission of Buddhism from contact with China and Korea.
- The Japanese recognized the facets of Chinese culture that could profitably be incorporated into their own, which for the arts meant new technologies, new building techniques, more advanced methods of casting in bronze , and new techniques and media for painting.
- Temple-building in the 8th century was focused around the Tōdaiji temple in Nara.
- Constructed as the headquarters for a network of temples in each of the provinces, the Tōdaiji is the most ambitious religious complex erected in the early centuries of Buddhist worship in Japan.

Key Terms

- **Nara**: Period of Japanese history lasting from 710 to 784 CE, during which Japan emerged as a strong state and witnessed an artistic golden age.
- **Tōdai-ji**: A Buddhist temple complex located in the city of Nara, Japan; its Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden) houses the world's largest bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana.

Background: The Nara period

The Nara period of the 8th century—so named because the seat of Japanese government was located in the city of Nara from 710 until 784—is often portrayed as a golden age in Japanese history. The period marked the emergence of a strong Japanese state and was characterized by a cultural flowering. The transmission of Buddhism provided the initial impetus for contact between China, Korea, and Japan, and the Japanese recognized facets of Chinese culture that could profitably be incorporated into their own. These included a system for converting ideas and sounds into writing; historiography; complex theories of government, such as an effective bureaucracy; and, most important for the arts, new technologies, new building techniques, more advanced methods of casting in bronze, and new techniques and media for painting.

The Tōdaiji Temple

Temple-building in the 8th century was focused around the Tōdaiji in Nara. Constructed as the headquarters for a network of temples in each of the provinces, the Tōdaiji is the most ambitious religious complex erected in the early centuries of Buddhist worship in Japan. Appropriately, the main Buddha hall, or *Daibutsuden*, was enshrined with the Rushana Buddha, a 16.2-meter (53-foot) Buddha completed in 752 that represents the essence of Buddhahood, just as the Tōdaiji represented the center for imperially sponsored Buddhism and its dissemination throughout Japan. Only a few fragments of the original statue survive, and the present hall and central Buddha are reconstructions from the Edo period.

Daibutsu of Tōdai-ji.: The Great Buddha statue (Daibutsu) has been recast several times for various reasons, including earthquake damage. The current hands of the statue were made in the Momoyama Period (1568–1615), and the head was made in the Edo period (1615–1867).

Clustered around the Daibutsuden on a gently sloping hillside are a number of secondary halls: the *Hokke-dō* (Lotus Sutra Hall), with its principal image; the *Fukukenjaku Kannon* (the most popular bodhisattva), crafted of dry lacquer (cloth dipped in lacquer and shaped over a wooden armature); the *Kaidanin* (Ordination Hall) with its magnificent clay statues of the Four Guardian Kings; and the storehouse, called the *Shōsōin*. This last structure is of great importance to art history as it stored the utensils used in the temple's dedication ceremony in 752 and the eye-opening ritual for the Rushana image, as well as government documents and many secular objects owned by the Imperial family.

Hokkedô at Todaiji in Nara Japan: The Tōdaiji (dating back to 728) is the most ambitious religious complex erected in the early centuries of Buddhist worship in Japan.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- ASURA detail Kohfukuji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ASURA_detail_Kohfukuji.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kofukuji0411. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kofukuji0411.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art%23Japan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dogen and Eisai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dogen%20and%20Eisai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Haniwa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Haniwa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zen. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Zen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Silk Road. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Silk_Road. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-Horyu-ji36s3200.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C5%8Dry%C5%AB-ji#/media/File:Horyu-ji36s3200.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Horyu-ji kondo02 2000b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Horyu-ji_kondo02_2000b.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Horyu-ji06s3200. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Horyu-ji06s3200.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- History of Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Japan%23Asuka_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kondo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kondo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prince Shotoku. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince%20Shotoku. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pagoda. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pagoda. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-NaraTodaijiDaibutsu0212.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C5%8Ddai-ji#/media/File:NaraTodaijiDaibutsu0212.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- NaraTodaiji0252. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NaraTodaiji0252.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Japan%23Nara_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Horyu-ji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Horyu-ji. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Todai-ji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Todai-ji. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 13.2: Buddhist Art in Japan is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

13.3: The Heian Period

Influence of Buddhism in the Heian Period

The Heian period in Japan witnessed a flowering of art and architecture influenced by Esoteric and Pure Land Buddhism.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Amida hall and images of the Amida Buddha portrayed in the art of Pure Land Buddhism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Heian Period (794 – 1185 CE) is considered Japan's "Golden Age," a high point in Japanese culture that greatly influenced art and architecture.
- Early Heian period sculptures inherited and modified late Nara period sculptural forms while developing new depictions of Esoteric Buddhist deities . During this time, wood also replaced bronze as the most common material for making Buddhist sculptures.
- The central role of ritual in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism led to a flourishing of the religious arts in the Heian period. Religious paintings, mandalas , and statues provided practitioners with ways to contemplate Buddhist deities and concepts.
- Pure Land Buddhism, offering salvation through belief in the Buddha of the Western Paradise, also influenced Japanese art.
- The Kyoto nobility created a new form of Buddha hall, known as the Amida hall, which blends the secular with the religious and houses one or more Buddha images within a structure resembling the mansions of the nobility.
- The golden Amida sculpture inside the famous Phoenix Hall was executed by the influential sculptor Jōchō, who used a new canon of proportions and the new sculptural technique of yosegi.
- Yamato-e , considered the classical Japanese style , was first developed during the late Heian period and inspired by the Tang Dynasty Chinese "blue and green style" of landscape painting.

Key Terms

- **yamato-e**: A classical Japanese style of painting, first developed during the late Heian period and inspired by Tang Dynasty paintings.
- **Esoteric Buddhism**: A complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice that evolved over several centuries.
- **Raigō**: An appearance of the Amida Buddha on a purple cloud at the time of one's death, which gave rise to a type of Japanese painting (a raigō-zu) of a Buddha accompanied by bodhisattvas.
- **mandala**: Any ritualistic geometric design symbolic of the universe used as an aid to meditation, particularly in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- **Saichō**: (767 – 822) A Japanese Buddhist monk credited with founding the Tendai school of Buddhism based on the Chinese Tiantai school he was exposed to during his trip to Tang China beginning in 804.
- **Kūkai**: (774–835) A Japanese monk, civil servant, scholar, poet, and artist; founder of the Shingon or "True Word" school of Buddhism.
- **Fujiwara**: A powerful family of regents in Japan that originated when the founder, Nakatomi no Kamatari (614-669), was rewarded by Emperor Tenji with the honorific name.

Background: The Heian Period

In 784, the Japanese Emperor Kammu, threatened by the growing secular power of the Buddhist institutions in the city of Nara, moved the capital of Japan to Heian-kyō (Kyōto), which remained the imperial capital for the next 1,000 years. The Heian Period, as it came to be called, refers to the years between 794 and 1185 when the Kamakura shogunate was established at the end of the Genpei War. It is considered Japan's "Golden Age," a high point in Japanese culture that later generations have always admired. The period is also noted for the rise of the samurai class, which would eventually take power and start the feudal period of Japan.

Influence of Esoteric Buddhism

The Late Nara period saw the introduction of Esoteric Buddhism to Japan from China by Kūkai and Saichō, who founded the Shingon and Tendai schools. The Heian period witnessed a flowering of Buddhist art and architecture and the introduction of Esoteric Buddhism to Japan. Early Heian period sculptures inherited and modified late Nara period sculptural forms while developing new images to depict wrathful Esoteric deities. During this time, wood also replaced bronze as the most common material for making Buddhist sculptures.

Kūkai impressed the emperors who succeeded Emperor Kammu and generations of Japanese, not only with his religious practices but also with his poetry, calligraphy , painting, and sculpture. Shingon Buddhist practice is based on various rituals, including the chanting of mantras , hand gestures (mudras), and meditation through visualization of mandalas. The central role of these rituals in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism led to a flourishing of the religious arts in the Heian period. Religious paintings, mandalas, and statues provided practitioners with ways to contemplate Buddhist deities and concepts.

A famous example of a Shingon mandala is the Taizokai (Womb World) mandala. Part of the Mandala of the Two Realms, the Womb World is composed of 12 zones representing different dimensions of Buddha nature. In the center sits the Vairocana Buddha within the lotus of compassion, surrounded by attendant Buddhas and Bodhisattvas . The Shingon sect believed that all beings have an innate Buddha nature.

Taizokai (Womb World) Mandala (Second Half of the Ninth Century): The center square represents the young stage of Vairocana Buddha (hanging scroll, color on silk).

Pure Land Buddhism and the Fujiwara Regency

Pure Land Buddhism offers salvation through belief in Amida Buddha (the Buddha of the Western Paradise). This branch of Buddhism became popular in Japan during the Fujiwara regency (794–1185), named for the powerful clan that dominated Japanese politics in the middle Heian period. The Fujiwara family, then the most powerful in the country, ruled as regents for the Emperor, effectively becoming hereditary civil dictators. Formal trade with China ended, allowing for the development of indigenous cultural forms. The Fujiwara period was a time of cultural and artistic flowering at the imperial court and among the aristocracy, and the Kyoto nobility developed a society devoted to elegant aesthetic pursuits.

The Amida Hall

New types of images were developed to satisfy the devotional needs of the increasingly important Pure Land sects in the 10th century. They created a new form of Buddha hall known as the Amida hall, which blends the secular with the religious and houses one or more Buddha images within a structure resembling the mansions of the nobility. The Hō-ō-dō (Phoenix Hall, completed in 1053) of the Byōdō-in, a temple in Uji to the southeast of Kyoto, is one of the finest examples of Fujiwara Amida halls. It consists of a main rectangular structure flanked by two L-shaped wing corridors and a tail corridor, set at the edge of a large artificial pond. Inside, a single golden image of Amida (c. 1053) is installed on a high platform.

Byōdō-in Phoenix Hall, Uji, Kyoto: The Phoenix Hall of the Byōdō-in is an exampla of Fujiwara Amida halls.

Raigō

Other popular images include the Raigō, which depicts the appearance of the Amida Buddha on a floating cloud along with his attendant celestial Bodhisattvas, Kannon and Seishi, at the time of one's death. A fine example of this type of image is found in the Phoenix Hall, whose walls are decorated with small relief carvings. These works depict the host believed to have accompanied Amida when he descended from his celestial realm to gather the souls of believers at the moment of death and transport them in lotus blossoms to the Western Paradise.

Amida Raigo painting: Color on silk, late Heian period. The Raigo image was introduced in Japan by the Pure Land School of Art during the Fujiwara Regency.

A famous early example of Raigō imagery dating from 1053 is painted on the interior of the Phoenix Hall doors of the Hō-ō-dō. It depicts the descent of the Amida Buddha and is one of the first examples of Yamato-e, a classical style of Japanese painting inspired by Tang dynasty paintings and fully developed by the late Heian period. It contains landscape elements such as softly

rolling hills that seem to reflect the actual appearance of the scenery around Kyoto. Stylistically, the painting is deeply influenced by the Tang Dynasty Chinese “blue and green style” of landscape painting traditions.

Amida Sculpture

A growing sense of grace, refinement, and softness emerged in Amida-style Buddhist sculptures, which culminated in the work of Jōchō (d. 1057), a Japanese sculptor of the Heian period. Jōchō’s workshop in Kyoto perfected the Wayō or “Japanese style” of sculpture. He used a new canon of proportions along with a new technique, *yosegi*, in which a single image is carved from multiple pieces of wood joined from the inside. While this technique limited the amount of surface detail an artist could carve into each piece, it forced the sculptor to convey his intended message within these preset limits. This resulted in finer and more ephemeral pieces. Most importantly, it allowed several assistants to work on the sculpture at once, greatly speeding up the process. Jōchō’s sculptures were remarkable for their intricately carved halos and the kindness and compassion of their elegant facial expressions.

Painting and Calligraphy in the Heian Period

In the Heian period, a style of calligraphy and painting emerged that was unique to Japan.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the reasons for the emergence of a uniquely Japanese style of calligraphy during the Heian period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Soukou Shujitsu is regarded as the first text with a unique style of Japanese calligraphy .
- In the last century of the Heian period, the horizontal, illustrated narrative handscroll known as emaki came to the fore.
- Dating from about 1130, the Genji Monogatari Emaki, a famous illustrated *Tale of Genji*, represents the earliest surviving yamato-e handscroll and is considered one of the high points of Japanese painting.
- 12th-century emaki artists devised a system of pictorial conventions that convey the emotional content of each scene. In the second half of the century, a livelier style of continuous narrative illustration became popular.
- The central role of ritual in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism led to a flourishing of religious painting and mandalas , which provided practitioners ways to contemplate Buddhist deities and concepts. A famous example is the Taizokai (Womb World) mandala.

Key Terms

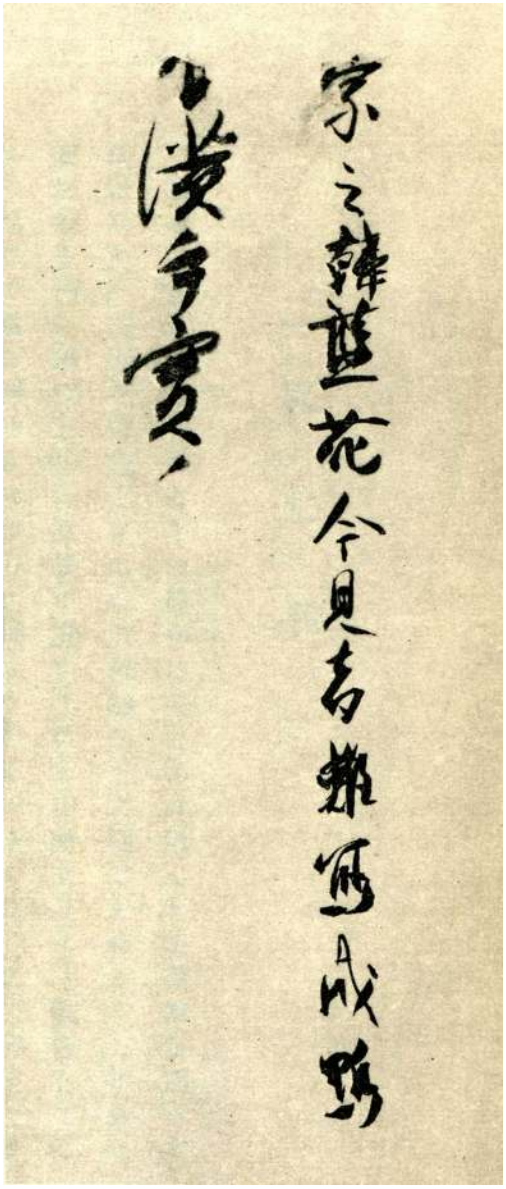
- **mandala**: Any ritualistic geometric design symbolic of the universe, used as an aid to meditation, particularly in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- **kana syllabary**: Syllabic Japanese scripts, a part of the Japanese writing system, that contrast with the logographic Chinese characters known in Japan as kanji (漢).
- **yamato-e**: A style of Japanese painting inspired by Tang dynasty paintings and fully developed by the late Heian period; it is considered the classical Japanese style.
- **hanging scroll**: One of the many traditional ways to display and exhibit Chinese painting and calligraphy, in which the work is displayed for short periods of time then rolled up and secured for storage.
- **handscroll**: A traditional Asian roll of papyrus, parchment, or paper that has been written, drawn or painted upon, which unfolds horizontally so that the reader can view one section at a time while holding it.

Calligraphy in the Heian Period

In the Heian period, a style of calligraphy emerged that was unique to Japan. Writing had been popularized, and the kana syllabary was devised to deal with elements of pronunciation that could not be written with the borrowed Chinese characters. At the time, Japanese calligraphers still fitted the basic characters, called kanji (漢), into the squares laid out centuries before.

Soukou Shujitsu is regarded as the first text that shows a style unique to Japanese calligraphy. The Tanka (短) poem below was written in 749 CE and shows some differences from Chinese calligraphy. The authentically Japanese wayō (和) style, or wayō-

shodō (和), is attributed to Ono no Michikaze (894-966 CE), one of the so-called sanseki (三, “Three Brush Traces”), along with Fujiwara no Sukemasa and Fujiwara no Yukinari. The “Cry for noble Saichō “, a poem written by Emperor Saga on the occasion of Saichō’s death, was one of the examples of this transformation. Ono no Michikaze served as an archetype for the Shōren-in school, which later became the Oie style of calligraphy. The Oie style was used for official documents in the Edo period and was the prevailing style taught in terakoya schools of that time.



Soukou Shujitsu: Soukou Shujitsu is regarded as the first text that shows a style unique to Japanese calligraphy. This Tanka (短) poem was written in 749 CE and shows some differences from Chinese calligraphy.

Emaki

In the last century of the Heian period, the horizontal, illustrated narrative handscroll known as emaki came to the fore. Dating from about 1130, the Genji Monogatari Emaki, a famous illustrated *Tale of Genji*, represents the earliest surviving yamato-e handscroll and is considered one of the high points of Japanese painting. Written about the year 1000 by Murasaki Shikibu, a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Akiko, the novel deals with the life and loves of Genji and the world of the Heian court after his death. The 12th-century artists of the emaki devised a system of pictorial conventions that convey the emotional content of each scene.

Panel from the Genji Monogatari Emaki Pictorial Scroll: A scene from the Illustrated scroll of the Tale of Genji (written by Murasaki Shikibu in the 11th century). The multi-panel curtain at the center bottom of the image is a kichō. The decorated sliding door panels at the top of the image are fusuma. The scroll was made in about 1130 CE and is in the Tokugawa Museum in Nagoya, Japan.

In the second half of the century, a livelier style of continuous narrative illustration became popular. The Ban Dainagon Ekotoba (late 12th century), a scroll that deals with an intrigue at court, emphasizes figures in active motion depicted in rapidly executed brush strokes and thin but vibrant colors.

Emaki also serve as some of the earliest and greatest examples of the otoko-e ("men's pictures") and onna-e ("women's pictures") styles of painting. There are many fine differences in the two styles, appealing to the perceived aesthetic preferences of the genders. Perhaps most easily noticeable are the differences in subject matter. Onna-e, epitomized by the *Tale of Genji* handscroll, typically deals with court life, particularly the court ladies, and with romantic themes. Otoko-e, on the other hand, often recorded historical events, particularly battles. The Siege of the Sanjō Palace (1160), depicted in the "Night Attack on the Sanjō Palace" section of the Heiji Monogatari handscroll, is a famous example of this style.

Mandalas

The central role of ritual in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism led to a flourishing of religious painting and mandalas in the Heian period. These works provided practitioners with ways to contemplate Buddhist deities and concepts. A famous example of a mandala from the Shingon school of Buddhism is the Taizokai (Womb World) mandala. Part of the Mandala of the Two Realms, the Womb World is composed of 12 zones representing different dimensions of Buddha nature. The Shingon sect believed that all beings have an innate Buddha nature. In the center sits the Vairocana Buddha within the lotus of compassion, surrounded by attendant Buddhas and Bodhisattvas .

Taizokai (Womb World) Mandala (Second Half of the Ninth Century): The center square represents the young stage of Vairocana Buddha. (hanging scroll, color on silk)

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- taizokai.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Taizokai.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Byodo-in Uji01pbs2640. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Byodo-in_Uji01pbs2640.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- AmidaRaigo. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AmidaRaigo.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Art of Esoteric Buddhism. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/313504/textbooks/storia-arte/art-of-south-and-southeast-asia-before-1200-chinese-and-korean-art-before-1279-japan-before-1333-4/heian-period-56/art-of-esoteric-buddhism-310-8317/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Japanese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art%23Heian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujiwara clan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fujiwara_clan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art in Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art_in_Japan%23Heian_period_.28794_-_1185.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujiwara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fujiwara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Raigo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Raigo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- yamato-e. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/yamato-e. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- taizokai.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Taizokai.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Soukou_Shujitsu.jpg. **Provided by**: Wiki Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soukou_Shujitsu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Genji emaki azumaya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Genji_emaki_azumaya.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Japanese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art%23Heian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kana syllabary. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/kana%20syllabary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/handscroll. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/hanging-scroll. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 13.3: The Heian Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

13.4: The Kamakura Period

Art of Pure Land Buddhism

The art of the Kamakura period reflected the introduction of the Pure Land School of Buddhism, which depicted the Amida Buddha.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the art of the Pure Land, Zen, and Kei schools of the Kamakura period.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Kamakura period was a period of crises in which the control of the country moved from the imperial aristocracy to the samurai; it was also, however, a time when Buddhism greatly flourished.
- The Kamakura period saw the introduction of the Amidist Pure Land schools of Buddhism, which emphasized salvation through faith in Amitabha .
- The Kamakura period favored more realistic and naturalistic art, a style exemplified by the sculpture of the Kei School.
- Among sculptors of the Kei school, Unkei is the most famous and accomplished; while his early works are fairly traditional, many show a flair for realism different from anything Japan had seen before. Some of the most popular paintings of the Kamakura period depict an ascending Amida Buddha.

Key Terms

- **busshi**: Japanese sculptor specializing in Buddha statues.
- **Lotus Sutra**: A popular Sanskrit treatise that is the basis of the many forms of Buddhism worldwide.
- **Amitabha**: The principal Buddha in the Pure Land sect, a branch of Buddhism practiced mainly in East Asia.

Background: The Kamakura Period

The Kamakura period in Japanese history (1185–1333 CE) was a period of crises in which control of the country moved from the imperial aristocracy to the samurai. The ascension of Minamoto Yoritomo to the title of Shogun following the Hōgen and Heiji rebellions and the victory of the Minamoto clan over the Taira marked the beginning of the Kamakura period. The era is sometimes called “the age of the warriors”; it is also, however, a time when exchanges with China’s Song dynasty continued and Buddhism greatly flourished.

Schools of Buddhism

This period saw the introduction of the two schools that had perhaps the greatest impact on the country: the Amidist Pure Land schools and the more philosophical Zen schools. The Amidist Pure Land schools, promulgated by evangelists such as Genshin and articulated by monks such as Hōnen, emphasized salvation through faith in Amitabha and remain the largest Buddhist sect today in Japan (and throughout Asia). The more philosophical Zen schools were promulgated by monks such as Eisai and Dogen and emphasized liberation through the insight of meditation. They were adopted equally by the upper classes and had a profound impact on Japanese culture .

Pure Land Buddhism and Art

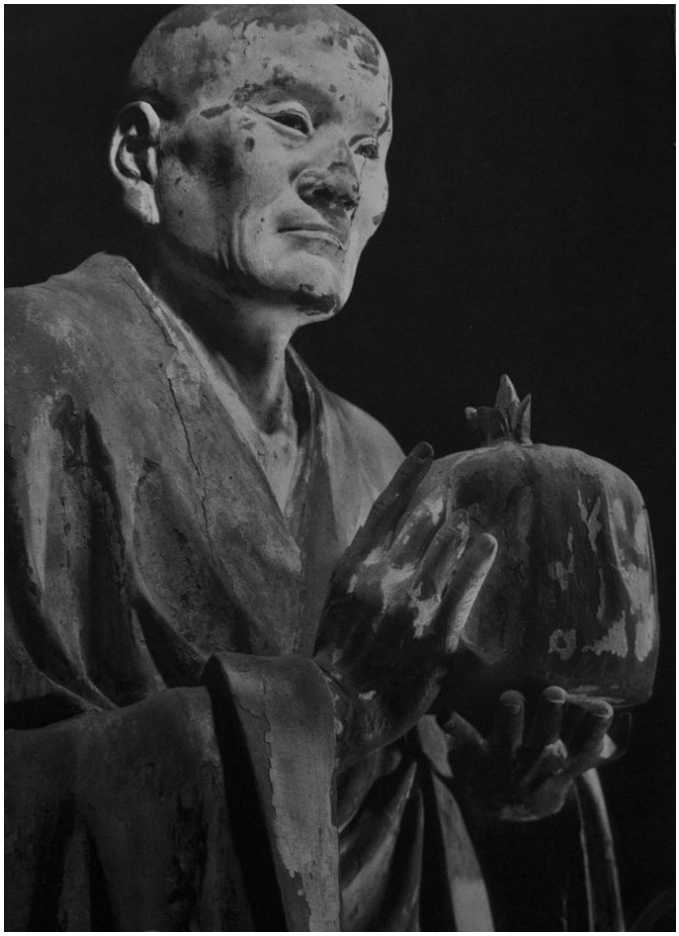
Pure Land Buddhism had substantial influence over the art of the Kamakura period.

The Kei School

The Kamakura period favored more realistic and naturalistic art, a style exemplified by the sculpture of the Kei School. Based in Nara , the Kei School was dominant in Buddhist sculpture in Japan beginning around 1200 and into the 14th century, remaining influential until the 19th century. The Kei school was developed and led by the Buddhist sculptor Jōchō, his successor Kakujō, and Kakujō’s son Raijō, the leading sculptors of the preceding generations.

Unkei

Among sculptors of the Kei school, Unkei is the most famous and considered the most accomplished sculptor of the period. Unkei's early works are fairly traditional, similar in style to pieces by his father, Kōkei. However, the sculptures he produced for the Tōdai-ji , a Buddhist temple complex in Nara, show a flair for realism different from anything Japan had seen before.



Muchaku at Kōfuku-ji; National Treasure: This sculpture exemplifies the realism of Unkei's work.

Amida Buddha Sculptures

Some of the most popular paintings of the Kamakura period depict an ascending Amida Buddha. The main tenet of Pure Land Buddhism is that chanting the name of Amida could lead to a reincarnation in the "pure land." Thus, scrolls of Amida were hung in the rooms of people who were dying; it was believed they could be saved by chanting the Amida mantra .

Buddhist Sculpture of Kamakura Period: Unkei in the guise of a monk, with prayer beads; note the powerful hands.

Japanese Painting and Sculpture in the Kamakura Period

The Kamakura Period was marked by a continuation of Heian painting traditions and new innovations in sculpture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the painting, sculpture, and calligraphy of Zen Buddhism during the Kamakura Period.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- A deepening pessimism resulting from the civil wars of 12th century Japan increased the appeal of the search for salvation; as a result, various schools of Buddhism grew in popularity.
- Zen Buddhism, which stresses a connection to the spiritual rather than the physical, was very influential in the art of Kamakura Japan.
- Painting from the Kamakura Period largely continued the traditions of the previous Heian Period, including emaki handscrolls , the yamato-e style of painting, and painted mandalas .
- Emaki or painted hand scrolls usually encompassed religious, historical, or illustrated novels, accomplished in the style of the earlier Heian period.
- The Kamakura period is widely regarded as a renaissance era in Japanese sculpture, spearheaded by the sculptors of the Buddhist Kei school.
- Among the sculptors of this era, the sculptor Unkei is the most famous and accomplished; his work exhibited a realism and humanism not seen in previous works.
- The Kei school was responsible for the restoration of the temples of Nara and Kyoto, which were destroyed during warfare in 1180-1185.

Key Terms

- **Nichiren Sect**: A branch of Buddhism based on the Lotus Sutra, which teaches that all people have an innate Buddha nature and are therefore inherently capable of attaining enlightenment in their current form and present lifetime.

- **Rinzai**: A school of Zen buddhism in Japan, based on sudden enlightenment though koans; for that reason, it's also known as the "sudden school".
- **Ji**: A branch of Pure Land Buddhism stressing the importance of reciting the name of Amida, nembutsu (念).

Japan suffered a series of civil wars in the late 12th century between several rival families. These wars eventually led to the rise of the feudalistic Kamakura shogunate . In a time of disunity and violence, deepening pessimism increased the appeal of the search for salvation. Kamakura was the age of the great popularization of Buddhism, and the reestablishment of cultural ties with China spawned the growth of Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdo shū Shinran) as the two major branches of Japanese Buddhism. These two new sects dominated the artwork produced during this period.

The Rise of Buddhism

During this time, a number of monks left the Tendai sect and founded separate Buddhist sects of their own. These included:

- Hōnen, founder of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism
- Shinran, disciple of Hōnen and founder of the Jōdo Shinshū sect
- Ippen, founder of the Ji sect, which emphasized devotion to Amida Buddha through an ecstatic dance
- Dōgen, founder of the Sōtō school of Zen
- Eisai, founder of the Rinzai school of Zen
- Nichiren, founder of the Nichiren Sect , which emphasized devotion to the Lotus Sutra , a manual of Buddhist aphorisms presented as a discourse from the Buddha

The older Buddhist sects, such as Shingon, Tendai, and the early schools of the Nara period, continued to thrive through the Kamakura period and even experienced some measure of revival. However, the older schools were partially eclipsed as the newer Kamakura schools increased in popularity and found followers among the new Kamakura government and its samurai.

Zen was not introduced as a separate school until the 12th century, when Myōan Eisai traveled to China and returned to establish a Linji lineage, which eventually perished. Decades later, Nanpo Shōmyō (南) (1235–1308) also studied Linji teachings in China before founding the Japanese Otokan lineage, the most influential and only surviving lineage of Rinzai in Japan. In 1215 Dōgen, a younger contemporary of Eisai's, journeyed to China himself, where he became a disciple of the Caodong master Tiantong Rujing. After his return, Dōgen established the Sōtō school, the Japanese branch of Caodong. The Sōtō school was further expanded by Keizan. Sōtō priests say that if Dogen is the father of Japanese Sōtō Zen, Keizan Jokin (1268-1325) is its mother. Keizan's Soji-ji temple was a rival to Dogen's Eihei-ji. Others say that Dōgen gave Sōtō Zen "high religious ideals" while Keizan ensured Sōtō's survival.

Painting in the Kamakura Period

Painting from the Kamakura Period largely continued the traditions of the previous Heian Period. As most of the paintings in both the Heian and Kamakura periods were religious in nature, the vast majority were by anonymous artists. Painted mandalas were common, and many were created as hanging scrolls and murals on the walls of temples. The classic yamato-e style of Japanese painting, which gained significance in the Heian period, was continued throughout this era. Stylistically, painting included landscape elements such as soft rolling hills that seem to reflect something of the actual appearance of the landscape of western Japan, and works continued to be informed by Tang Dynasty Chinese "blue and green style" landscape painting traditions.

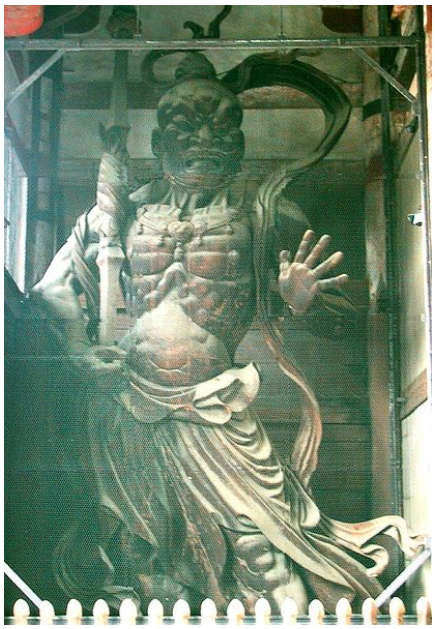
Paintings were used to decorate sliding doors (fusuma) and folding screens (byōbu). In addition, the *emaki* format of painting, consisting of long illustrated hand scrolls, remained popularity. The Kamakura Period witnessed the production of a large number of emaki, usually encompassing religious, historical, or illustrated novels accomplished in the style of the earlier Heian period.

Kamakura Sculpture

While painting continued to develop throughout the period, sculpture was by far the most popular art form. The Kamakura period is widely regarded as a renaissance era in Japanese sculpture, spearheaded by the sculptors of the Buddhist Kei school. Based in Nara, the Kei school was the dominant school in Japanese Buddhist sculpture into the 14th century. Artist of the Kei school succeeded the technique "yosegi-zukuri" (woodblock construction) and developed a new sculptural style marked by realism, solidity, and representation of movement and emotion. These artists studied early Nara period masterpieces and Chinese Song dynasty

sculptures and paintings to influence their work. Sculptors of the time often worked for the Kamakura shogunate and other military clans, producing Buddhist sculptures as well as portrait sculptures.

The Kei school was responsible for the restoration of the temples of Nara and Kyoto, which had been destroyed during warfare in 1180-1185. Among the sculptors of this era, the sculptor Unkei is the most famous and accomplished. His most famous works include a pair of Kongō-rikishi colossal statues in the Tōdai-ji temple of Nara, along with the elaborate portraiture-like statues of Indian priests in Kōfuku-ji. Unkei had six sons who were also sculptors, and their work, like his, is imbued with the new kind of realism and humanism. Tankei, the eldest son and a brilliant sculptor, became the head of his father's studio. Kōshō, the 4th son, produced a remarkable sculpture of the 10th-century Japanese Buddhist teacher Kuya (903-972).



Nio guardian, Todai-ji complex, Nara: Agyō, one of the two Buddhist Niō guardians at the Nandai-mon in front of the Todai ji in Nara. These are some of the finest wooden sculptures in Japan from the 13th century carved by the Kamakura-era sculptor Unkei in 1203.

Kaikei was another famous sculptor of the time, a collaborator of Unkei, and a devout adherent of Pure Land sect of Buddhism. He worked closely with the priest Chōgen (1121–1206) on the reconstruction of the Tōdai-ji temple in Nara. Many of his figures are more idealized than those of Unkei and his sons and are characterized by a beautifully finished surface, richly decorated with pigments and gold. Perhaps his most important work is Amitabha Triad of Ono Jōdo-ji (1195).

Kaikei Buddha: Many of Kaikei's figures are more idealized than that of Unkei and are characterized by a beautifully finished surface, richly decorated with pigments and gold.

Japanese Calligraphy in the Kamakura Period

Japanese calligraphy in the Kamakura Period was influenced by the principles of Zen Buddhism.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the purposes of Japanese calligraphy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- After the invention of Hiragana and Katakana , the unique Japanese syllabaries, a distinctive Japanese writing system developed, and calligraphers produced styles intrinsic to Japan.
- Japanese calligraphy of the Kamakura Period both influenced and was influenced by Zen thought. With the rise of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism , a less technical style of calligraphy appeared, representative of Zen attitudes.
- Calligraphy of this era was exemplified in the works of Musō Soseki (in the sosho style), Shūhō Myōcho (the founder of Daitoku-ji in Kyoto), and Fujiwara no Shunzei and Fujiwara no Teika (in the wayō style).
- Through Zen, Japanese calligraphy absorbed a distinctive aesthetic often symbolized by the ensō , or circle of enlightenment .

Key Terms

- **Katakana**: A Japanese syllabary originating from 800 CE and one component of the Japanese writing system along with hiragana, kanji, and in some cases the Latin script (known as romaji).
- **Hiragana**: A Japanese syllabary originating from 800 CE and one component of the Japanese writing system, along with katakana, kanji, and in some cases rōmaji (the Latin-script alphabet).

Japanese calligraphy is a form of artistic writing in the Japanese language. For many years, the most esteemed calligrapher in Japan was Wang Xizhi, a Chinese calligrapher dating to the 4th century; however, after the invention of Hiragana and Katakana, the Japanese unique syllabaries, a distinctive Japanese writing system developed, and calligraphers produced styles intrinsic to Japan.

Calligraphy in the Kamakura Period

Various cultural and religious influences contributed to the rise of Japanese calligraphy during the Kamakura period.

Zen Calligraphy of the Kamakura Period: Calligraphy by Musō Soseki (1275–1351, Japanese zen master, poet, and calligrapher. The characters "別" ("no spiritual meaning") are written in a flowing, connected soshō style.

Background: Culture and Politics in the Kamakura Period

The ascension of Minamoto Yoritomo to the title of Shogun following the Hōgen and Heiji rebellions and the victory of the Minamoto clan over the Taira marked the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185–1333 CE). The era is sometimes referred to as "the age of the warriors," with a broad transition of influence from court to the military establishment. However, it was also a time when exchanges with China of the Song dynasty continued and Buddhism flourished.

Zen Calligraphy

Japanese calligraphy of the Kamakura Period both influenced and was influenced by Zen thought. With the rise of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism, a less technical style of calligraphy appeared, representative of Zen attitudes. This was exemplified in the works of Musō Soseki, who wrote in a refined sosho style, or Shūhō Myōcho (better known as Daito Kokushi), the founder of Daitoku-ji in Kyoto. In terms of wayō (和様) style of calligraphy, the works of Fujiwara no Shunzei and Fujiwara no Teika are considered outstanding examples of the late Heian and early Kamakura Periods. Zen monks such as Shunjo studied in China, and the copybooks that he brought with him were highly influential for the karayō tradition of calligraphy, expressing a clear kaisho style. Other monks were also influential during this era, including Rankei Doryū, who founded the Kenchō-ji temple in Kamakura where many of his works have been preserved.

Technique

In accordance with this school of Buddhist thought, for any particular piece of paper the calligrapher has but one chance to create with the brush. The brush strokes cannot be corrected, and lack of confidence will show up in the work. The calligrapher therefore must concentrate and be fluid in execution. The brush was believed to write a statement about the calligrapher at a certain moment in time.

Through Zen, Japanese calligraphy absorbed a distinctive aesthetic often symbolized by the ensō, or circle of enlightenment. Zen calligraphy is practiced by Buddhist monks and most shodō practitioners. To write Zen calligraphy with mastery, the mind must be cleared and the letters allowed to flow naturally. This state of mind was known as the mushin (無 "no mind state") by the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro. It is based on the principles of Zen Buddhism, which stress a connection to the spiritual rather than the physical. Before Japanese tea ceremonies (which are connected to Zen Buddhism), one looks at a work of shodō to clear the mind as an essential preparatory step.

Ensō: Ensō (c. 2000) by Kanjuro Shibata XX. Some artists draw ensō with an opening in the circle, while others close the circle.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Unkei Rokuharamitsuji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Unkei_Rokuharamitsuji.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Kofukuji_Hokuendo_Muchaku_Unkei.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Unkei#/media/File:Kofukuji_Hokuendo_Muchaku_Unkei.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Unkei. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Unkei. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kei School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kei_school. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art in Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art_in_Japan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Buddhism in Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Japan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- busshi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/busshi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Amitabha. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Amitabha. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lotus Sutra. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Lotus_Sutra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kaikei_ZIZO_BOSATSU_KSITIGARBHA.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaikei#/media/File:Kaikei_ZIZO_BOSATSU_KSITIGARBHA.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nio guardians by Unkei in Nara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nio_guardians_by_Unkei_in_Nara.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art in Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art_in_Japan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kamakura period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamakura_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen%23Kamakura_.281185-1333.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_sculpture%23Kamakura_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rinzai. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Rinzai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nichiren Sect. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nichiren%20Sect. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- muso-soseki-3.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Muso_Soseki_3.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Enso.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ens%C5%8D#/media/File:Enso.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Enso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ens%C5%8D. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kamakura Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamakura_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 13.4: The Kamakura Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Native-American Art Before 1300 CE

14.1: The New World

14.2: Mesoamerica

14.3: South America

14.4: North America

This page titled 14: Native-American Art Before 1300 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

14.1: The New World

The New World

Indigenous visual arts traditions in the Americas span thousands of years, representing cultures from Mesoamerica to the Arctic.

Learning Objectives

Gain an appreciation for the breadth and diversity of indigenous peoples and cultures of the Americas

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The New World refers to the western hemisphere, especially the Americas, after the European “age of discovery” beginning in the early 16th century. The indigenous peoples of the Americas are the pre-Columbian (before European contact) inhabitants of North America, Mesoamerica , and South America as well as Greenland.
- Scientists believe that the most recent migration of humans from Eurasia to the Americas took place around 12,000 years ago via a land bridge that connected the two continents.
- Indigenous populations across the Americas created monumental architecture, large-scale cities, chiefdoms, states, and empires.
- Indigenous Americans also created pottery, paintings, jewelry, weaving and textiles, sculptures , basketry, carvings, beadwork, and other objects that comprise a major category in world art history.

Key Terms

- **Mesoamerica**: A region and cultural area in the Americas, extending approximately from central Mexico to Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica, where pre-Columbian societies flourished before the Spanish colonization of the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries.
- **pre-Columbian**: The inhabitants, societies, and culture of the Americas prior to European contact, colonization, and influence; literally “pre-(Christopher)Columbus.”
- **Paleo-Indians**: The first people to inhabit the Americas from Eurasia more than 11,000 years ago.
- **New World**: The term used by Europeans to describe the western hemisphere, specifically the Americas, during the “age of discovery” beginning in the early 16th century.
- **indigenous peoples**: People defined in international or national legislation as having a set of specific rights based on their historical ties to a particular territory, and their cultural or historical distinctiveness from other populations that are often politically dominant.

The New World refers to the western hemisphere, especially the Americas, which was almost entirely unknown to Europeans before the “age of discovery” beginning in the early 16th century. The Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was one of the earliest and most well-known of these European explorers; the first of his four famous voyages from Spain to the Americas began in 1492.

Sebastian Munster's Map of the New World, first published in 1540: A colorful map of what the German cartographer, Munster, and his contemporaries believed the Americas looked like during the European "age of discovery."

The indigenous peoples of the Americas are the pre-Columbian inhabitants of North America, Mesoamerica, and South America as well as Greenland. There are almost as many terms for indigenous people in the Americas as there are geographic regions. For example, "pueblos indígenas" is a common term in Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. "Aborigen" is used in Argentina; "Amerindian" is used in Guyana. Indigenous peoples are commonly known in Canada as Aboriginal peoples, which includes First Nations, Inuit , and Métis peoples. Indigenous peoples of the United States are commonly known as Native Americans or American Indians, and Alaskan Natives.

Scientists believe that migrations of humans from Eurasia (the combined continental landmass of Europe and Asia) to the Americas first took place via Beringia, a land bridge which formerly connected the two continents across what is now the Bering Strait. The most recent migration probably took place around 12,000 years ago, but the earliest period remains somewhat of a mystery. These early Paleo-Indians soon spread throughout the continent, diversifying into many hundreds of culturally distinct nations and tribes. According to the oral histories of many indigenous peoples of the Americas, they have been living there since their genesis, represented in a wide range of traditional creation stories.

Indigenous Cultures

While some indigenous peoples of the Americas were traditionally hunter-gatherers — and many, especially in Amazonia, still are — many groups practiced aquaculture and agriculture. The impact of their agricultural endowment to the world is a testament to their time and work in reshaping and cultivating the flora indigenous to the Americas. While some societies depended heavily on agriculture, others practiced a mix of farming, hunting, and gathering. In some regions, the indigenous peoples created monumental architecture, large-scale cities, chiefdoms (with hierarchies based on kinship), states, and empires. Many parts of the Americas are still populated by indigenous Americans, and some countries have sizable populations, including Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Greenland, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru.

At least a thousand different indigenous languages are spoken in the Americas. Some, such as Quechua languages, Aymara, Guaraní, Mayan languages, and Nahuatl, count their speakers in millions. Many indigenous people also maintain aspects of their traditional cultural practices, including religion, social organization, and subsistence economies. Some indigenous peoples still live in relative isolation from Western society.

Cultural practices in the Americas seem to have been shared mostly within geographical zones where unrelated peoples adopted similar technologies and social organizations. An example of such a cultural area is Mesoamerica, where millennia of coexistence and shared development among the peoples of the region produced a fairly homogeneous culture with complex agricultural and social patterns. Another well-known example is the North American plains where until the 19th century, Native American groups such as Blackfoot, Crow,and Sioux existed as nomadic hunter-gatherers (primarily buffalo hunting).

Indigenous visual arts traditions in the Americas span thousands of years, representing cultures from Mesoamerica to the Arctic. Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas comprise a major category in world art history. Their contributions include pottery, paintings, jewelry, weavings and textiles, sculptures, basketry, carvings, and beadwork. Much of this artwork provides

insight into the values , beliefs, and ceremonial rituals of early cultures of the Americas. In the following chapter, we will examine in detail the artworks of indigenous groups throughout North and South America prior to 1300.

Mayan Funerary Urn: Ceramics such as this urn provide insight into the values, beliefs, and ceremonial rituals of early cultures of the Americas.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Map_of_America_by_Sebastian_Munster.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_America_by_Sebastian_Munster.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ceramics of indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceramics_of_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mesoamerica. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesoamerica. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Mesoamerica (Paleo-Indian). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Mesoamerica_(Paleo-Indian). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ceramics of indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceramics_of_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New World. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 14.1: The New World is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

14.2: Mesoamerica

Cultures of Mesoamerica

Mesoamerica was dominated by three cultures in the Pre-Classical (up to 200 CE) to Post-Classical periods (circa 1580 CE): the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec.

Learning Objectives

Identify distinctive trends and materials in each of these civilization's art production

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Olmec people are known for extraordinarily detailed jade figurines and colossal heads of rulers made of basalt.
- Mayan culture achieved an advanced system of hieroglyphic writing, a sophisticated calendar, and a productive system of art patronage .
- The Mayan civilization rose very quickly. Although much of its art was lost to the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century, many stone and wood sculptures
  that attest to the Mayan's distinctive religious beliefs still survive.

Key Terms

- **stelae**: Upright stone slabs or columns typically bearing a commemorative inscription or relief design, often serving as gravestones. (singular: stela)
- **jade**: An ornamental rock with green and blue properties.
- **Mesoamerica**: A pre-Columbian cultural region extending from the southern part of Mexico to an area that comprises some parts of the countries of Central America.
- **hieroglyphic**: A type of writing consisting of hieroglyphs, a largely pictorial character of the Ancient Egyptian writing system.

Mesoamerica is a region in the Americas that extends from central Mexico to northern Costa Rica. Three cultures dominated the pre-Columbian history of Mesoamerica: the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec civilizations.

Olmec Culture

The Olmec civilization, which flourished from 1200–400 BCE, defines the Pre- Classical period; the Olmecs are generally considered the forerunner of all Mesoamerica cultures including the Maya and Aztecs. Primarily centered in the modern states of Tabasco and Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico, the Olmec people are known for creating an abundance of small and extraordinarily detailed jade figurines. The figurines typically exhibit complex shapes such as human figures, human-animal composites of deities and gods, and animals like cats and birds. Although we don't know the specific purpose of these jade objects, their presence in some Olmec graves suggests they served a religious purpose in addition to being signs of wealth and goods for trade.

Olmec jade figurine: Small holes were drilled around the edges so that this figurine could be worn on the body with twine.

The Olmec are also known for building massive stone sculptures, many of which were discovered at La Venta in the modern Mexican state of Tabasco. Made from basalt rock from the Tuxtla mountains to the north, the Olmec used this rock to create altars, stelae , and colossal heads. Each head is rendered as a distinct individual and is thought to resemble an Olmec ruler. Each ruler's personality is represented in the distinct headdresses that adorn the sculptures' heads.

Olmec Colossal Head: Heads made from basalt boulders weighed anywhere between 6 and 50 tons.

Mayan Culture

Mayan culture peaked during the Classical period (ca. 200–900 CE) and featured complex organization of large agricultural communities ruled by monarchs. They built imposing pyramids , temples, palaces, and administrative structures in densely populated cities in southern Mesoamerica. The Maya had the most advanced hieroglyphic writing in Mesoamerica and the most sophisticated calendrical system. In Mayan culture, we also see one of the earliest systems of art patronage. Kings and queens employed full-time artists in their courts, many of whom signed their work. It's thus unsurprising that the most common motifs in Mayan art are mortal rulers and supernatural beings.

Mayan relief sculpture from Palenque, Mexico: The Mayans were among the most advanced cultures of Mesoamerica. Most of their art represents of mortal rulers or mythic deities.

In Palenque, Mexico (a prominent Mayan city in the Classical period), the ruler Lord Pakal commissioned a grouping of large structures that stand on high ground in the middle of the town. One of those buildings, the Temple of the Inscriptions, is a nine-level pyramid that is 75 feet high. The layers of the structure probably reflect the Mayan belief that the underworld had nine levels. Inscriptions line the back wall of the temple, giving the building its name.

Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque, Mexico: The Temple is one of four structures commissioned by the Maya ruler Lord Pakal.

Aztec Culture

Mayan civilization was in decline by the time of the Spanish Conquest in the early 16th century, and by then the Aztecs controlled much of Mexico. The rise of the Aztec was quick. Once a migratory people, they arrived in the Basin of Mexico in the 13th century where they eventually settled on an island in Lake Texcoco; they called their new home Tenochtitlan. In only a few centuries, the Aztecs aggressively expanded their territory and transformed Tenochtitlan into a capital so grand that the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes remarked on its beauty en route to invade the city in November 1519.

Metalwork was a particular skill of the Aztecs. Unfortunately, very few examples of their characteristic small gold and silver objects survive. When the Spanish arrived, most were melted down for currency. Stone sculpture and wood figurines fared much better during the Conquest. Aztec sculpture, most of which took the form of human figures carved from stone and wood, were not religious idols as one might suspect. Instead of containing the spirit of a deity, monumental sculptures were made to “feed” the deities with blood and precious objects in order to keep the gods, who resided elsewhere in the temples, happy. These sculptures are the source of stories told by Spanish conquistadors of huge statues splattered with blood and encrusted with jewels and gold.

15th century CE vase representing Tlaloc, the Aztec god of rain, storms and agriculture : The vase is from the glittering Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan.

Colossal Heads of the Olmec

The Olmec culture of the Gulf Coast of Mexico produced the first major Mesoamerican art and is particularly known for the creation of colossal stone heads.

Learning Objectives

Describe the colossal stone heads made by the Olmecs

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Olmec built large cities with ceremonial centers. They also made small sculptures and figurines from many types of material. Using huge basalt boulders transported from mountains in another region, the Olmec produced at least 17 sculptures of human heads.
- The monuments are thought to represent Olmec rulers because of their distinct facial features and adornments.
- The heads date from between 1500 and 400 BCE.
- The only example of a colossal head found in a region outside the Olmec's domain is at Takalik Abaj in Guatemala.

Key Terms

- **Olmec**: Ancient pre-Columbian people living in the tropical lowlands of south-central Mexico, in roughly the modern-day states of Veracruz and Tabasco.
- **earspools**: Cylindrical earrings that pierce the earlobe.
- **Preclassic period**: Also known as the Formative period, dating roughly from as early as 1500 BCE to about 400 BCE.

The First Major Mesoamerican Art

The art of the Olmec, which emerged during the preclassic period along the Gulf of Mexico, was the first major Mesoamerican art. Across the swampy coastal areas of the modern Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco, the Olmec constructed ceremonial centers

on raised earth mounds. These centers were filled with objects made from materials including jade , clay, basalt, and greenstone. Most of these objects were figurines or sculptures that resembled both human and animal subjects.

Fish Vessel, 12th–9th century BCE: Olmec art frequently featured animal as well as human subjects.

While Olmec figurines are found abundantly in sites throughout the Formative period, monumental works of basalt sculpture, including colossal heads, altars, and seated figures are the most recognizable feature of this culture . The huge basalt rocks for the large sculptures were quarried at distant sites and transported to Olmec centers such as San Lorenzo and La Venta. The colossal heads range in height from 5 to 12 feet and portray adult males wearing close-fitting caps with chin straps and large, round earspools . The fleshy faces have almond-shaped eyes, flat, broad noses, thick, protruding lips, and downturned mouths. Each face has a distinct personality, suggesting that they represent specific individuals.

Olmec Head No. 3 from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan 1200-900 BCE.: Olmec colossal heads are believed to be depictions of powerful rulers.

These massive basalt boulders were transported from the Sierra de los Tuxtlas Mountains of Veracruz. When originally displayed in Olmec centers, the heads were arranged in lines or groups; however, the method used to transport the stone to these sites remains unclear. Given the enormous weight of the stones and the manpower required to transport them over large distances, it is probable that the colossal portraits represent powerful Olmec rulers.

The discovery of a colossal head at Tres Zapotes in the nineteenth century spurred the first archaeological investigations of Olmec culture by Matthew Stirling in 1938. Seventeen confirmed examples are traced to four sites within the Olmec heartland on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Most colossal heads were sculpted from spherical boulders, but two from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán were recarved from massive stone thrones. An additional monument at Takalik Abaj in Guatemala is a throne that may have been carved from a colossal head. This is the only known example from outside the Olmec heartland.

Dating the monuments remains difficult because of the movement of many from their original contexts prior to archaeological investigation. Most have been dated to the Early Preclassic (or Formative) period (1500–1000 BCE) with some to the Middle Preclassic (1000–400 BCE) period. The smallest weighs six tons, while the largest is estimated to weigh 40 to 50 tons, although it was abandoned and left unfinished close to the source of its stone.

Teotihuacan

At its height, Teotihuacan was one of the largest cities in the world with a population of 200,000. It was a primary center of commerce and manufacturing.

Learning Objectives

Understand the importance of Teotihuacan as a religious, commercial, and art historical center

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The name Teotihuacan means Gathering Place of the Gods.

Key Terms

- **taludtablero**: A design characteristic of Mayan architecture at Teotihuacan in which a sloping talud at the base of a building supports a wall-like tablero, where ornamental painting and sculpture are usually placed.

Located some 30 miles northeast of present-day Mexico City, Teotihuacan experienced a period of rapid growth early in the first millennium CE. By 200 CE, it emerged as a significant center of commerce and manufacturing, the first large city-state in the Americas. At its height between 350 and 650 CE, Teotihuacan covered nearly nine miles and had a population of about 200,000, making it one of the largest cities in the world. One reason for its dominance was its control of the market for high-quality obsidian. This volcanic stone, made into tools and vessels , was traded for luxury items such as the green feathers of the quetzal bird, used for priestly headdresses, and the spotted fur of the jaguar, used for ceremonial garments.

Ceremonial center of the city of Teotihuacan, Mexico, Teotihuacan culture, c. 350-650 CE.: View from the Pyramid of the Moon down the Avenue of the Dead to the Ciudadela and the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. The Pyramid of the Sun is at the middle left. The avenue is over a mile long.

The people of Teotihuacan worshipped deities that were recognizably similar to those worshipped by later Mesoamerican people, including the Aztecs, who dominated central Mexico at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Among these are the Rain or Storm God (god of fertility, war, and sacrifice), known to the Aztecs as Tlaloc, and the Feathered Serpent, known to the Maya as Kukulcan and to the Aztecs as Quetzalcoatl.

Teotihuacan's principal monuments include the Pyramid of the Sun, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the Ciudadela (Spanish for fortified city center), a vast sunken plaza surrounded by temple platforms. The city's principal religious and political center, the Ciudadela could accommodate an assembly of more than 60,000 people. Its focal point was the pyramidal Temple of the Feathered Serpent. This seven-tiered structure exhibits the taludtablero construction that is a hallmark of the Teotihuacan architectural style . The sloping base, or *talud*, of each platform supports a vertical *tablero*, or entablature , which is surrounded by frame and filled with sculptural decoration . The Temple of the Feathered Serpent was enlarged several times, and as was characteristic of Mesoamerican pyramids, each enlargement completely enclosed the previous structure like the layers of an onion. Archaeological excavation of this temple's earlier-phase tableros and a stairway balustrade have revealed painted heads of the Feathered Serpent, the goggle-eyed Rain or Storm God, and reliefs of aquatic shells and snails. The flat, angular, abstract style, typical of Teotihuacan art, is in marked contrast to the curvilinear style of Olmec art.

Temple of the Feathered Serpent, the Ciudadela.: Detail of pyramid, showing the alternating *talud* base and vertical *tablero* (left).

The Decline

Sometime in the middle of the seventh century disaster struck Teotihuacan. The ceremonial center burned and the city went into a permanent decline. Nevertheless, its influence continued as other centers throughout Mesoamerica and as far south as the highlands of Guatemala borrowed and transformed its imagery over the next several centuries. The site was never entirely abandoned as it remained a legendary pilgrimage center. The much later Aztec people (c. 1300-1525 CE) revered the site as the place where they believed the gods created the sun and the moon. In fact, the name "Teotihuacan" is actually an Aztec word meaning "Gathering Place of the Gods."

Art of the Maya

Mayan art includes a wide variety of objects, commissioned by rulers, that depict scenes of both elite and everyday society.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key features of Mayan art from the Classic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Maya blue was a distinctive color preserved for centuries due to its unique chemical composition; unfortunately, the technique involved in producing it has been lost.
- The Maya carved stone portraits of their rulers as memorials.
- There is an especially strong tradition of painting and sculpture in Mayan culture . Often sculpture was painted with distinctive dyes and techniques characteristic of the Maya.
- Much Mayan art was commissioned by rulers to accompany them to the Underworld.

Key Terms

- **Stele**: As stone slab placed vertically and decorated with inscriptions or reliefs. Used as a grave marker or memorial.
- **Maya blue**: A unique bright azure pigment manufactured by cultures of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, such as the Maya and Aztec. Made from a combination of a particular kind of clay, indigo, and vegetable dye.

Mayan Portraiture

Strong cultural influences stemming from the Olmec tradition and Teotihuacan contributed to the development of the Mayan city center and the culture's Classic artistic tradition. The most sacred and majestic buildings of Mayan cities were built in enclosed, centrally located precincts. The Maya held dramatic rituals within these highly sculptured and painted environments. For example, the grand pyramids of Copan and Tikal are among the most imposing buildings the Maya erected; each contains sculpted portraits that glorified the city's rulers.

Stele H in the Great Plaza at Copan represents one of the city's foremost leaders, 18-Rabbit, who reigned from 695-738 CE. During the ruler's long reign, Copan reached its greatest physical extent and breadth of political influence. On Stele H, 18-Rabbit wears an elaborate headdress and ornamented kilt and sandals. He holds across his chest a double-headed serpent bar, symbol of the sky and of his absolute power. His features, although idealized, have the quality of a portrait likeness. The Mayan elite, like the Egyptian pharaohs, tended to have themselves portrayed as eternally youthful. The dense, deeply carved ornamental details that frame the face and figure stand almost clear of the main stone block and wrap around the sides of the stele. The stele was originally painted, with remnants of red paint visible on many stelae and buildings in Copan.

Stele H portraying the ruler 18-Rabbit. Great Plaza at Copan, Honduras. Made of stone, 11′ 9″ high. : Although a powerful ruler, 18-Rabbit eventually was captured and beheaded by a rival king.

Clay Sculpture

Many small clay figures from the Classic Mayan period remain in existence. These free-standing objects illustrate aspects of everyday Mayan life. As a group, they are remarkably life-like, carefully descriptive, and even comic at times. They represent a wider range of human types and activities than commonly depicted on Mayan stelae. Ball players, women weaving, older men, dwarves, supernatural beings, and amorous couples, as well as elaborately attired rulers and warriors, comprise one of the largest groups of surviving Mayan art. Many of the hollow figurines are also whistles. They were made in ceramic workshops and painted with *Maya Blue*, a dye unique to Mayan and Aztec artists. Small clay figures found in burial sites were made to accompany the Mayan dead on their inevitable voyage to the Underworld.

Ballplayer, Maya, from Jaina Island, Mexico, 700-900CE. Painted clay, 6.25″ high: Maya Blue is a pigment that has proven virtually indestructible, unlike other dyes and paints that have largely disappeared over time.

Painted Vases

The Maya painted vivid narrative scenes on the surfaces of cylindrical vases. A typical vase design depicts a palace scene where an enthroned Mayan ruler sits surrounded by courtiers and attendants. The figures wear simple loincloths, turbans of wrapped cloth and feathers, and black body paint. These painted vases may have been used as drinking and food vessels for noble Maya, but their final destination was the tomb, where they accompanied the deceased to the Underworld. They likely were commissioned by the deceased before his death or by his survivors, and were occasionally sent from distant sites as funerary offerings .

Detail of Enthroned Maya lord and courtiers, cylinder vase, from Motul de San Jose region, Guatemala, c. 672-830 CE : Ceramic with red, rose, orange, white, and black on cream, 8″ high.

Architecture of the Maya

The Maya had complex architectural programs. They built imposing pyramids, temples, palaces, and administrative structures in densely populated cities.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristic style and functional elements of Maya architecture in the Classic and Postclassic periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Maya grouped large architectural structures at the centers of major cities.
- Pyramids and temples were used for religious purposes and built by rulers as memorials to themselves.
- Administrative structures such as the Palace demonstrate the sophistication of Maya architecture and technology.
- Maya architecture is ornate and elaborate, incorporating bas- relief , sculpture , and painted murals on the interiors and exteriors of structures.

- The Mesoamerican ball game was a central part of ancient Mesoamerican cultural, religious, and political life.
- The cities of Palenque and Chichen Itza, both in Mexico, contain iconic examples of Mayan architecture from the Classical and Postclassical periods.

Key Terms

- **roof comb**: In a Mayan building, a masonry wall along the apex of a roof built above the level of the roof proper. Roof combs support the highly decorated false facades that rise above the height of the building at the front.
- **mansard roof**: A roof with four sloping sides that become steeper halfway down.
- **aqueduct**: An artificial channel for conveying water, typically in the form of a bridge supported by tall columns across a valley.
- **bas-relief**: A kind of sculpture in which shapes are carved so that they are only slightly higher than the flat background.
- **balustrades**: A kind of low wall placed at the sides of staircases, bridges, etc., made of a row of short posts topped by a long rail.

The Mayan civilization emerged during the late Preclassic period (250 BCE-250 CE), reached its peak in the southern lowlands of Guatemala during the Classic period (250-900 CE), and shifted to northern Yucatan during the Postclassic period (900-1521 CE).

Architecture in Palenque

In Palenque, Mexico, a prominent city of the Classic period, the major buildings are grouped on high ground . The central group of structures includes the Palace (possibly an administrative and ceremonial center as well as a residential structure), the Temple of the Inscriptions, and two other temples. Most of the structures in the complex were commissioned by a powerful ruler, Lord Pakal, who reigned from 615 to 638 CE, and his two sons, who succeeded him.

Palace (right) and Temple of the Inscriptions, tomb-pyramid of Lord Pakal (left) : Palenque, Mexico. Mayan culture, late 7th century.

Temple of the Inscriptions

The Temple of the Inscriptions is a nine-level pyramid that rises to a height of about 75 feet. The consecutive layers probably reflect the belief, current among the Aztec and Maya at the time of the Spanish conquest, that the underworld had nine levels. Priests would climb the steep stone staircase on the exterior to reach the temple on top, which recalls the kind of pole-and-thatch houses the Maya still build in parts of the Yucatan today. The roof of the temple was topped with a crest known as a roof comb , and its facade still retains much of its stucco sculpture. Inscriptions line the back wall of the outer chamber, giving the temple its name.

Temple of the Inscriptions (tomb pyramid of Lord Pakal) : Palenque, Mexico, 7th century

The Palace

Across from the Temple of Inscriptions is the Palace, a complex of several adjacent buildings and courtyards built on a wide artificial terrace. The Palace was used by the Mayan aristocracy for bureaucratic functions, entertainment, and ritual ceremonies .

Numerous sculptures and bas-relief carvings within the Palace have been conserved. The Palace's most unusual and recognizable feature is the four-story tower known as the Observation Tower. Like many other buildings at the site, the Observation Tower exhibits a mansard roof . The Palace was equipped with numerous large baths and saunas which were supplied with fresh water by an intricate water system. An aqueduct constructed of great stone blocks with a six-foot-high vault diverts the Otulum River to flow underneath the main plaza.

The Palace's Observation Tower with mansard roof : Palenque, Mexico, late Classic period

Architecture in Chichen Itza

As the focus of Maya civilization shifted northward in the Postclassic period, a northern Maya group called the Itza rose to prominence. Their principal center, Chichen Itza, (Yucatan State) Mexico, which means "at the mouth of the well of the Itza," flourished from the 9th to 13th centuries CE, eventually covering about six square miles.

El Castillo

One of Chichen Itza's most conspicuous structures is El Castillo (Spanish for the castle), a massive nine-level pyramid in the center of a large plaza with a stairway on each side leading to a square temple on the pyramid's summit. At the spring and fall equinoxes, the setting sun casts an undulating, serpent-like shadow on the stairways, forming bodies for the serpent heads carved at the base of the balustrades .

El Castillo (the Castle) : Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico. 9th-13th century.

The Great Ball Court

The Great Ball Court northwest of the Castillo is the largest and best preserved court for playing the Mesoamerican ball game, an important sport with ritual associations played by Mesoamericans since 1400 BCE. The parallel platforms flanking the main playing area are each 312 feet long. The walls of these platforms stand 26 feet high. Rings carved with intertwined feathered serpents are set high at the top of each wall at the center. At the base of the interior walls are slanted benches with sculpted panels of teams of ball players. In one panel, one of the players has been decapitated; the wound spews streams of blood in the form of wriggling snakes.

At one end of the Great Ball Court is the North Temple, also known as the Temple of the Bearded Man (Templo del Hombre Barbado). This small masonry building has detailed bas-relief carving on the inner walls, including a center figure with decorative carvings that resemble facial hair. Built into the east wall are the Temples of the Jaguar. The Upper Temple of the Jaguar overlooks the ball court and has an entrance guarded by two large columns carved in the familiar feathered serpent motif . At the entrance to the Lower Temple of the Jaguar is another Jaguar throne similar to the one in the inner temple of El Castillo.

The Great Ball Court, Chichen Itza, Mexico Late Classic period, 551′ x 230′: The modern version of the Mesoamerican ball game is called Ulama and is similar to racquetball.

Ceramics of the Veracruz

Ceramic figurines are a hallmark of Classic Veracruz art. The Veracruz people produced a variety of small clay figures in multiple areas around the modern state of Veracruz, Mexico.

Learning Objectives

Describe characteristics of ceramic figurines from two parts of Veracruz known for ceramic production in the Classic and Late Classic periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Classic Veracruz culture produced ceramic figurines in multiple distinctive styles and depicting many types of people.

- There are strong stylistic differences between ceramic figures from the cities of Remojadas and Nopiloa.
- The highly ritualized Mesoamerican ball game was of crucial importance to the Veracruz culture and was represented in their art.
- Smiling figures from Remojadas called Sonrientes are the most recognizable ceramic figures produced by the Veracruz people.

Key Terms

- **Mesoamerican ballgame**: A sport with ritual associations played since 1,400 BC by the pre-Columbian peoples of Ancient Mesoamerica. The sport had different versions in different places during the millennia, and a more modern version of the game, ulama, is still played in a few places by the indigenous population.
- **Sonrientes**: A type of ceramic figurine produced by the Veracruz culture. Literally translates to “smiling” in Spanish.
- **appliqués**: In the context of ceramics, adding low-relief clay forms to hard surfaces for embellishment.

The modern state of Veracruz lies along the Mexican Gulf Coast, north of the Maya lowlands and east of the highlands of central Mexico. Culturally diverse and environmentally rich, the people of Veracruz took part in dynamic interchanges between three regions that over the centuries included trade, warfare, and migration. During the middle centuries of the first millennium, the artistically gifted Veracruzanos created inventive ceramic sculpture in diverse yet related styles.

Until the early 1950s, Classic Veracruz ceramics were few, little understood, and generally without provenance (known history). Since then, the recovery of thousands of figurines and pottery pieces from sites such as Remojadas and Nopiloa (some initially found by looters), has expanded our understanding and filled many museum shelves. Artist and art historian Miguel Covarrubias described Classic Veracruz ceramics as “powerful and expressive, endowed with a charm and sensibility unprecedented in other, more formal cultures.”

Figurines from Remojadas and Nopiloa

Remojadas-style figurines, perhaps the most easily recognizable from this culture, are usually hand-modeled and often adorned with *appliqués* . Of particular note are the *Sonrientes* (Smiling) Figurines, with triangular-shaped heads and outstretched arms. Figurines from Nopiloa are often molded and usually less ornate, without appliqués. The Sonrientes figure from Remojadas (below) provides scholars with an example of the clothing worn in ancient times, such as the loincloth and headdress. The flattened forehead on this smiling figure may represent the practice of intentional cranial deformation or may simply reflect an artistic convention. Many American cultures considered a flattened forehead desirable and used a variety of techniques to flatten the skulls of infants while they were still pliable.

Smiling Figure, Late Classic Period, 7th-8th century, Remojadas, Veracruz, Mexico, 45.5cm high: Made of brown clay with white pigment. The figure contains both hand-modeled and mold-made elements.

Another smiling figure from the Remojadas region is a hollow ceramic sculpture representing an individual celebrating with music and dance. This bare-chested figure with open mouth and filed teeth stands energetically with legs spread and arms lifted as if caught in mid-motion. He wears a woven cap with geometric patterns, an elaborate skirt, circular earrings, a beaded necklace, and a bracelet. His face and body contain patterns evocative of body paint, including slight lines emanating from his lower eyelids and onto his cheeks. This sculpture evokes a festive dance or ritual accompanied by the rhythmic reverberation of the hand-held rattle and celebratory sound escaping from the figure’s open mouth.

Smiling Figure, Late Classic Period, 7th–8th century : Remojadas, Veracruz, Mexico, 45 cm high

In contrast to Smiling Figures from Remojadas, the mold-made ceramic figure from Nopiloa below depicts a bearded, mustachioed male wearing a ballgame yoke around his waist to protect him from the hard, solid rubber ball used in play. There are cylindrical ear ornaments in his ears and beneath his arm, a baton-like object perhaps related to the local incarnation of the game. The rules and manner in which the Mesoamerican ballgame was played varied among contemporary sites and evolved through time. Surviving evidence suggests human sacrifice was a frequent outcome, but the game may also have been played for other purposes such as sport. The people of ancient Veracruz interacted with people from other Mesoamerican cultures, and this Nopiloa figure displays motifs commonly found in Mayan art. Knotted ties like those around this player's wrist and neck connote captured prisoners in Mayan pictorial language. A motif similar to the Maya mat, a symbol of rulership, appears on the flanged headdress of the ballplayer. Like Mayan figurines of this type, the body of this figure is a whistle, a musical instrument used in ritual and ceremony .

Ball Player Figurine, 7th–10th century, Nopiloa, Veracruz, Mexico, 27 cm. high.: Nopiloa, Veracruz, Mexico. 27 centimeters high.

Codices of the Mixtec

Mixtec culture had a unique and complex writing system that used characters and pictures to represent complete words and ideas instead of syllables or sounds. They made codices to document important historical events in their society.

Learning Objectives

Understand the uses and structure of Mixtec codices

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mixtec codices were made of deerskin and folded in an accordion pattern. Only eight Mixtec codices survive.
- Mixtec codices allow us to trace Mixtec history from 1550 CE back to 940 CE, deeper in time than any other Mesoamerican culture except the Maya.
- Codices represented historical events on both a micro and macro scale for Mixtec nobility.

Key Terms

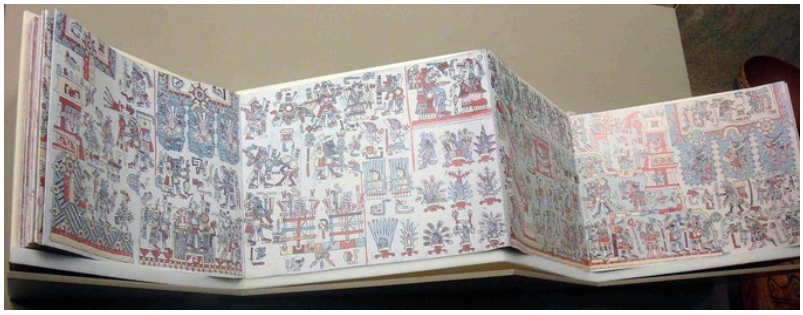
- **codices**: Books constructed of sheets of paper, vellum, papyrus, or similar materials, with hand-written contents. Codex: singular
- **logographic**: Type of written language in which the characters/pictures used represent complete words and ideas instead of syllables or sounds.
- **Mixtec**: A Mesoamerican people who lived in southern Mexico before the rise of the Aztecs.

About the Mixtec

The Mixtecs were one of the most influential ethnic groups to emerge in Mesoamerica during the Post-Classic period. Never a united nation, the Mixtecs waged war and forged alliances among themselves as well as with other peoples in their vicinity. They also produced beautiful manuscripts and metal work and influenced the international artistic style used from Central Mexico to Yucatan.

During the Classic period, the Mixtecs lived in hilltop settlements of northwestern Oaxaca, a fact reflected in their name in their own language, Ñuudzahui, meaning “People of the Rain.” During the Post-Classic period, the Mixtecs slowly moved into adjacent valleys and then into the great Valley of Oaxaca. This time of expansion is recorded in a large number of deerskin manuscripts called *codices*, only eight of which have survived. Nevertheless, these manuscripts allow us to trace Mixtec history from 1550 CE back to 940 CE, deeper in time than any other Mesoamerican culture except the Maya.

Mixtec Codices



Mixtec Codex Zouche-Nuttall: Mixtec codices were made of deerskin and folded like an accordion.

Mixtec codices represent a type of writing classified as *logographic* , meaning the characters and pictures used represent complete words and ideas instead of syllables or sounds. In Mixtec, the relationships among pictorial elements denote the meaning of the text, whereas in other Mesoamerican writing the pictorial representations are not incorporated into the text. Common topics found in the codices are biographies of rulers and other influential figures, records of elite family trees, mythologies, and accounts of ceremonies .

A Warrior Scene from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall:

The above detail from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall depicts a group of warriors conquering a town (an event noted by the warriors' drawn weapons and the arrow piercing the hill). Above each participant's head is a glyph, or pictograph , with a dot. The glyphs below the warriors are calendrical day signs. They are also, however, the names of Mixtec nobles; among this group, a person's name was often his or her birthday.

Pre-Columbian Mixtec are mainly concerned with histories. They record events such as royal births, wars and battles, royal marriages, forging of alliances, pilgrimages , and death of rulers. In addition to the calendrical signs used for dating events and naming individuals, the Mixtecs used a combination of conventionalized pictures and glyphs to illustrate the type and nature of the event. One example is the wedding scene, usually shown as two individuals of opposite sex facing each other and sitting on jaguar-pelt chairs, as illustrated by a scene from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall which records the marriage of the legendary Mixtec King 8 Deer "Tiger Claw" of Tilantongo to Lady 12 Snake in 1051 CE.

A Marriage Scene from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall:

This arrangement of the bride and groom is a purely pictorial convention, with no connection to the language. This means that no idiom or phrase in the Mixtec language that describing two people sitting face-to-face is a metaphor for marriage. However, the cup of chocolate held by Lady 12 Snake may represent the expression *ynodzehua*, which means "dowry" in Mixtec, where the root *dzehua* means "chocolate." Chocolate or cacao was one of the most expensive and luxurious products in Mesoamerica, and cacao beans were used as currency. It is no surprise the word for dowry would be based on chocolate.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- hb_02.18.309.jpg. **Provided by**: Metropolitan Museum of Art. **Located at**: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/jade2/hd_jade2.htm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- display-2408.jpg. **Provided by**: Ancient History Encyclopedia. **Located at**: http://www.ancient.eu/image/2408/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Pre-Columbian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Columbian_art%23Mesoamerica_and_Central_America. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- display-1402.jpg. **Provided by**: Ancient.eu. **Located at**: http://www.ancient.eu/image/1402/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 1280px-Palenque_temple_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_the_Inscriptions%23/media/File:Palenque_temple_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pre-Columbian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Columbian_art%23Mesoamerica_and_Central_America. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mesoamerica. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mesoamerica. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec Art. **Provided by**: Ancient. **Located at**: http://www.ancient.eu/Aztec_Art/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Olmec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmec. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Olmec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmec. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Olmec colossal heads. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmec_colossal_heads. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Olmec. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Olmec. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Teotihuacan-Temple_of_the_Feathered_Serpent-3035.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_the_Feathered_Serpent,_Teotihuacan#/media/File:Teotihuacan-Temple_of_the_Feathered_Serpent-3035.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Teotihuacan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Teotihuacan. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Teotihuacan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Teotihuacan%23Teotihuacan_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Teotihuacan. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Teotihuacan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- download.jpeg. **Provided by**: National Gallery of Art. **Located at**: www.nga.gov/kids/mayakids.pdf. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IMG_1729a.preview.jpg. **Provided by**: The Mayan Calendar Portal . **Located at**: www.maya-portal.net/media/gallery/copan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- detail.jpg. **Provided by**: Smart History. **Located at**: http://smarthistory.org/politics-and-history-on-a-maya-vase/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/The Mayas. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org's_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/The_Mayas%23Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maya blue. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya%20blue. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The_Observation_Tower.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palenque#/media/File:The_Observation_Tower.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palenque_temple_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palenque#/media/File:Palenque_temple_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1920px-Chichen_Itza_3.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Castillo,_Chichen_Itza#/media/File:Chichen_Itza_3.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chichen-Itza-Ballcourt-Panorama-2010.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chichen_Itza#/media/File:Chichen-Itza-Ballcourt-Panorama-2010.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Palenque_8.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palenque_8.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maya Civilization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_civilization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palenque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palenque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- El Castillo, Chichen Itza. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Castillo,_Chichen_Itza. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chichen Itza. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chichen_Itza. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- DT6056.jpg. **Provided by**: Metropolitan Museum of Art . **Located at**: http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/316267. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 04ver_main.jpg. **Provided by**: Textile Museum of Canada, Gardiner Museum. **Located at**: www.textilemuseum.ca/cloth_clay/resources/veracruz_004.cfm. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- DP104829.jpg. **Provided by**: Metropolitan Museum of Art. **Located at**: http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/313386. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Museum Collections - Mesoamerica - Classic Veracruz - Artifact #3. **Provided by**: Textile Museum of Canada, Gardiner Museum. **Located at**: www.textilemuseum.ca/cloth_clay/resources/veracruz_003.cfm. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Museum Collections - Mesoamerica - Classic Veracruz - Artifact #4. **Provided by**: Textile Museum of Canada, Gardiner Museum. **Located at**: www.textilemuseum.ca/cloth_clay/resources/veracruz_004.cfm. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Classic Veracruz culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Classic_Veracruz_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maya-Codices.jpg. **Provided by**: Treasures of Mexico. **Located at**: http://www.ancient-origins.net/artifacts-ancient-writings/treasures-mexico-mixtec-aztec-maya-codices-survived-conquistadors-003245. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex-Zouche-Nuttall-2.jpg. **Provided by**: Latin American Studies. **Located at**: http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mixtec-codices.htm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mixtec_marriage.gif. **Provided by**: Ancient Scripts. **Located at**: www.ancientscripts.com/mixtec.html. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mixteca. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixteca%23Language.2C_codices.2C_and_artwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mesoamerican chronology. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesoamerican_chronology%23Postclassic_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mixtec Codices. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixtec%20Codices. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mixtec. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mixtec. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- metallurgy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/metallurgy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 14.2: Mesoamerica is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

14.3: South America

Ceramics in Early South America

The ceramic objects of the Paracas, Nazca, and Moche communities of Peru vary in artistic forms and were important cultural artifacts. Like the Tiwanaku and Waki people of Bolivia and their contemporaries, the Wari people of Peru produced pottery that was multifaceted in both aesthetics and utility.

Learning Objectives

Compare the aesthetic style, technique, and function of ceramics made by the Paracas, Nazcu, Moche, Tiwanaku, Waki, and Wari cultures

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Paracas culture (from 800 to 100 BCE) immediately preceded and heavily influenced the Nazca culture.
- The art of the Paracas culture has mainly been preserved in tombs and on mummies .
- The Nazca, like all Pre-Columbian societies in South America including the Inca , had no writing system, in contrast to the contemporary Maya of Mesoamerica . The iconography or symbols on their ceramics served as a means of communication.
- As in other cultures, Moche ceramics were probably used for educational purposes and communication.
- The Moche culture used mold technology to replicate ceramic forms .
- Irrigation and the passage of fluids in the human body are important themes in Moche culture and artwork.
- The realistic detail in Moche ceramics may have helped them serve as didactic models.
- The Tiwanaku state was an important precursor to the Inca Empire.
- Small decorative objects that held ritual religious meaning were used to spread the influence of the capital city of Tiwanaku to surrounding communities.
- The Tiwanaku and Wari cultures must have interacted, given the similarities in the artifacts of each culture, but whether their relationship was amicable or antagonistic is unknown.

Key Terms

- **slip painting**: A type of pottery decoration in which a liquid mixture of clay and/or other materials suspended in water is applied to wet clay before it is fired in a kiln.
- **Huacas**: In Quechua, a Native American language of South America, a huaca or waqa is an object that represents something revered, typically a monument of some kind. The term huaca can refer to natural locations, such as immense rocks.
- **Middle Horizon**: Cultural period of Peru and the Andean region lasting from 600 to 1000 CE.
- **resin painting**: A type of pottery decoration in which ceramics are painted after they are fired in a kiln with a sticky organic substance exuded by trees and other plants.
- **Wari**: A Middle Horizon civilization that flourished in the south-central Andes and coastal area of modern-day Peru, from about 500 to 1000 CE.
- **kero**: A type of wooden drinking vessel produced by the Incas and earlier Andean cultures.
- **phytomorphic**: Having the attributes of a plant.
- **Moche**: A civilization that flourished in northern Peru from about 100 to 800 AD, particularly noted for their elaborately painted ceramics, gold work, monumental constructions (huacas), and irrigation systems.
- **Andean**: Of or pertaining to the Andes mountains in South America.

Paracas and Nazca Cultures

The Paracas culture was an important Andean society between approximately 800 and 100 BCE, with an extensive knowledge of irrigation and water management. It developed in the Paracas Peninsula in the Ica Region of Peru.

The Nazca culture flourished from 100 to 800 CE beside the dry southern coast of Peru in the river valleys of the Rio Grande de Nazca drainage and the Ica Valley. Heavily influenced by the preceding Paracas culture, the Nazca produced an array of beautiful crafts and technologies such as ceramics, textiles, and geoglyphs (most commonly known as the Nazca lines).

Paracas Ceramics

Many ceramics of the Paracas have been found in tombs, particularly in the Paracas Cavernas. These are shaft tombs set into the top of Cerro Colorado, each containing multiple burial sites. The associated ceramics include incised polychrome (the surface has been incised with a sharp tool and painted multiple colors), “negative” resist decoration (pottery is covered in material, then painted and uncovered to reveal a pattern of negative and positive space), and other techniques of the Paracas tradition.

Nazca Ceramics

The Nazca culture is characterized by its beautiful polychrome pottery, painted with at least 15 distinct colors. The shift from post-fire resin painting to pre-fire slip painting marked the end of Paracas- style pottery and the beginning of Nazca-style pottery. Archaeologists have excavated highly valued polychrome pottery among all classes of Nazca society, illustrating that it was not just the elite that had access to these pieces.

The Nazca pottery sequence has been divided into nine phases, progressing from realistic subject matter such as fruits, plants, people, and animals to motifs that included abstract elements as part of the design and geometric iconography. The Nazca, like all Pre-Columbian societies in South America including the Inca, had no writing system, in contrast to the contemporary Maya of Mesoamerica. The iconography or symbols on their ceramics served as a means of communication.

Moche Ceramics

From 100 to 800 CE, Moche civilization flourished in northern Peru with its capital, Huacas del Sol y de la Luna, located near present-day Trujillo.

Huaca del Sol: Huaca del Sol, “Temple of the Sun,” was the Mochica political capital.

Traditional North Coast Peruvian ceramic art uses a limited palette , relying primarily on red and white, fine line painting, fully modeled clay, naturalistic figures, and stirrup spouts (in which the stirrup handle forms part of the spout, which emanates from the top of the stirrup). Moche ceramics created between 150 and 800 AD epitomize this style. These realistic pots have been found not only in major North Coast archaeological sites, such as Huaca de la luna, Huaca del Sol, and Sipan, but at small villages and unrecorded burial sites as well.

The realistic detail in Moche ceramics may have helped them serve as didactic models. Older generations could pass down general knowledge about reciprocity and embodiment to younger generations through such portrayals. Important social activities are documented in Moche pottery, including war, sex, metalwork , and weaving. Moche ceramics vary widely in shape and theme and are not generally uniform, although the use of mold technology did enable for mass production.

Erotic Moche Pot: This piece is an example of the didactic role of ceramics in Moche culture.

Because irrigation was the source of wealth and foundation of the empire, Moche culture emphasized the importance of circulation and flow. Expanding upon this, the Moche focused on the passage of fluids in their artwork, particularly life fluids through vulnerable human orifices.

The coloration of Moche pottery is often simple and follows the Peruvian tradition with yellowish cream and rich red used almost exclusively on elite pieces and with white and black used rarely. Their adobe buildings have been mostly destroyed by looters and natural forces over the last 1300 years, but the huacas that remain show that their murals featured vibrant colors.

Tiwanaku and Waki Cultures

Tiwanaku is an important Pre-Columbian archaeological site in western Bolivia, South America. Tiwanaku is recognized by Andean scholars as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire, flourishing as the ritual and administrative capital of a major state power for approximately 500 years.

The “Gate of the Sun”: This site was the spiritual and political center of the Tiwanaku culture.

The city and its inhabitants left no written history, and the modern locals know little about the ancient city and its activities. An archaeologically based theory asserts that around 400 CE, Tiwanaku went from a locally dominant force to a predatory state. Tiwanaku expanded its reaches into the Yungas and brought its culture and way of life to many other cultures in Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. However, Tiwanaku was not exclusively a violent culture. To expand its reach, Tiwanaku used politics to create colonies, negotiate trade agreements (which made the other cultures rather dependent), and establish state cults. Many others were drawn into the Tiwanaku empire due to religious beliefs.

Ceramics & Textiles

Tiwanaku ceramics and textiles were composed of bright colors and stepped patterns. An important ceramic artifact is the kero , a drinking cup that was ritually smashed after ceremonies and placed in burials. Tapestries and tunics provide examples of textiles found at Tiwanaku.

These decorative objects typically depicted herders, effigies , trophy heads, sacrificial victims, and felines. Religion and influence from the main site to the satellite centers were spread through small portable objects that held ritual religious meaning. They were created in wood, engraved bone, and cloth and depicted puma and jaguar effigies, incense burners, carved wooden hallucinogenic snuff tablets, and human portrait vessels .

The Wari

Throughout their imperial reign, the Tiwanaku shared domination of the Middle Horizon with the Wari, whose culture rose and fell around the same time and was centered 500 miles north in the southern highlands of Peru. It is unknown whether the relationship between the two empires was cooperative or antagonistic. Definite interaction between the two is proved by their shared iconography in art. Significant elements of both styles (the split eye, trophy heads, and staff-bearing profile figures, for example) seem to have been derived from the earlier Pukara culture in the northern Titicaca Basin.

Wari earthenware pot with painted design, 650-800 CE (Middle Horizon): The Wari shared much in common aesthetically with the Tiwanaku.

Textiles in Early South America

The intricate, complex textiles of the Paracas and Nazca cultures were often associated with a burial ritual.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the distinguishing characteristics of textiles in pre-Colombian Andean society

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Both the Nazca and preceding Paracas culture created intricate textiles, most likely produced by women using a backstrap loom .
- Like the two cultures' ceramics , many of their textiles were associated with burial rituals .
- Because of the dry climate in southern Peru, many Nazca and Paracas textiles have been well-preserved.
- The so-called "Paracas Textile" tells modern scholars a great deal about the inhabitants of ancient Peru. For instance, they traded extensively with people who lived well outside their territory.

Key Terms

- **Andean**: Of or pertaining to the Andes mountains in South America.
- **backstrap loom**: A simple loom with roots in ancient civilizations, consisting of two sticks or bars between which the warps are stretched. One bar is attached to a fixed object, and the other to the weaver through a strap around the back.

Textiles of Andean Cultures

The Paracas culture was an important Andean society between approximately 800 and 100 BCE, with an extensive knowledge of irrigation and water management. It developed in the Paracas Peninsula in the Ica Region of Peru.

Many ceramics and textiles of the Paracas have been found in tombs, particularly in the Paracas Cavernas. These shaft tombs, set into the top of Cerro Colorado, each contain multiple burial sites. The associated ceramics include incised polychrome, "negative" resist decoration, and other wares of the Paracas tradition. The associated textiles include many complex weave structures and elaborate plaiting and knotting techniques.

The later Nazca people also produced technically complex textiles. The Nazca flourished from 100 to 800 CE beside the dry southern coast of Peru in the river valleys of the Rio Grande de Nazca and the Ica Valley. Heavily influenced by the preceding Paracas culture, the Nazca produced an array of beautiful crafts and technologies such as ceramics, textiles, and geoglyphs (most commonly known as the Nazca lines).

Woman weaving a textile using a backstrap loom:

Nazca textiles were most likely woven from spun cotton and wool by women at habitation sites. The textiles would have been made using a backstrap loom, similar to the way textiles are made in the region today. Textiles were woven with the common motifs before these appeared on painted pottery. The dry desert has preserved the textiles of both the Nazca and Paracas cultures, which comprise most of what is known about early textiles in the region. Shawls, dresses, tunics , belts, and bags have been found

through excavations at Cahuachi and elsewhere. Many textiles associated with the Nazca culture are garments that were included with grave goods found at burial sites.

Mummy Bundles on the Paracas Peninsula

One of the most extraordinary masterpieces of Andean textiles is a nearly 2,000-year-old cloth from the South Coast of Peru. Despite its small size (about two by five feet), it contains a vast amount of information about the people who lived in ancient Peru, and despite its great age and delicacy, its colors are brilliant and tiny details amazingly intact. The arid environment of southern Peru along the Pacific shore allows organic material buried in the sand to remain well-preserved for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Nasca, *Mantle ("The Paracas Textile")* : 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

In the ancient cemeteries on the Paracas Peninsula, the dead were wrapped into "mummy bundles" with layers of cloth and clothing. The largest and richest mummy bundles contained hundreds of brightly embroidered textiles, feathered costumes, and fine jewelry, interspersed with food offerings such as beans. Early reports claimed that this cloth came from the Paracas peninsula, so it was called "THE Paracas textile," to mark its excellence and uniqueness. Currently, scholars have revised this provenance and now attribute the cloth to the Nasca culture.

Detail of border figure on The Paracas Textile:

Like other very fine cloths, the Paracas Textile is finished so carefully on both sides that it is almost impossible to distinguish which is the correct side. Although the central cloth and its framing border are created by different techniques, both display perfect reversibility—except for three border figures. These three appear in back view on one side of the cloth, thereby designating a "front" and "back" to the textile.

Architecture in Early South America

Chavín de Huántar and Tiwanaku were important ceremonial centers in pre-Inca South America.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the multiple functions of architecture in early South America

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During its heyday, Chavín de Huántar was used as a religious center for ceremonies and events or consultation with an oracle.
- The temple at Chavín de Huántar is a massive flat-topped pyramid surrounded by lower platforms, along with a U-shaped plaza with a sunken circular court in the center.
- Tiwanaku is recognized as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire.
- Archaeologists still struggle to understand how the megaliths used to construct Tiwanaku were transported to the site.

Key Terms

- **Chavin**: A civilization that developed in the northern Andean highlands of Peru from 900 to 200 BCE. Their influence extended to other civilizations along the coast.
- **megalith**: A gigantic stone, often weighing several tons.
- **trilithon**: A megalithic post-and-lintel structure.

Chavín de Huántar and Tiwanaku were important ceremonial centers in pre-Inca South America.

Chavín de Huántar

Chavín de Huántar is an archaeological site containing ruins and artifacts , constructed circa 1200 BCE and occupied until around 400-500 BCE by the Chavín, a major pre-Inca culture . The site is located 160 miles north of Lima, Peru at an elevation of 10,000 feet, on the edge of the Conchucos Valley.

The site of Chavín de Huántar: Chavín de Huántar was of both geographical and religious significance to the Chavín.

Occupation at Chavín de Huántar has been carbon dated to at least 3000 BCE, with ceremonial activity occurring primarily toward the end of the second millennium and through the middle of the first millennium BCE. While the fairly large population was based on an agricultural economy, the city's location at the headwaters of the Marañn River, between the coast and the jungle, made it ideal for the dissemination and collection of both ideas and material goods. This archaeological site has revealed a great deal about the Chavín culture. The transformation of the center into a valley-dominating monument had a complex effect. Chavín de Huántar became a pan-regional place of importance. People used it to gather, attend and participate in rituals , and consult with oracles.

Findings at Chavín de Huántar indicate that social instability and upheaval began between 500 and 300 BCE, at the same time the larger Chavín civilization began to decline. Large ceremonial sites were abandoned, some unfinished, and were replaced by villages and agricultural land.

The temple at Chavín de Huántar was the religious center of the Chavín people and the capital of the Chavín culture. This massive flat-topped pyramid is surrounded by lower platforms and located in a U-shaped plaza with a sunken circular court in the center. The inside of the temple walls are decorated with sculptures and carvings. Chavín de Huántar was constructed over many stages, starting prior to 1200 BCE, with most major construction over by 750 BCE. The site continued as a ceremonial center until around 500 BCE.

The Circular Plaza at Chavín de Huantar: The Circular Plaza Terrace was built up around the Circular Plaza in order to make the 21-meter diameter plaza artificially sunken.

Tiwanaku

Tiwanaku is an important Pre-Columbian archaeological site in western Bolivia. It is recognized by Andean scholars as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire, flourishing as the ritual and administrative capital of a major state power for approximately 500 years.

The city and its inhabitants left no written history, and the modern locals know little about the ancient city and its activities. However, the site might have been inhabited as early as 1500 BCE. An archaeological theory asserts that around 400 CE, Tiwanaku went from a locally dominant force to a predatory state. It expanded its reaches into the Yungas and brought its culture and way of life to many cultures in Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. However, Tiwanaku was not exclusively a violent culture. To expand its reach, Tiwanaku used politics to create colonies, negotiate trade agreements (which made the other cultures rather dependent), and establish state cults. Many were drawn into the Tiwanaku empire by their religious beliefs.

Architecture

Tiwanaku monumental architecture is characterized by megaliths of exceptional workmanship. The main architectural appeal of the site comes from the carved images and designs on carved doorways and megalithic constructions such as the Gate of the Sun. Tiwanaku's architecture and skill in stone-cutting reveals a knowledge of descriptive geometry.

The Gate of the Sun is a trilithon that stands nearly 10 feet tall and 13 feet wide. Its weight is estimated at approximately 10 tons. Although there have been various modern interpretations of its mysterious inscriptions, the carvings that decorate the gate are believed to possess astronomical significance and may have served a calendrical purpose.

The Gate of the Sun: This site was the spiritual and political center of the Tiwanaku culture.

The Gate of the Sun shares its location with the Kalasasaya, a temple in a megalithic courtyard more than 300 feet long. Since the late 20th century, researchers have theorized that this was not the gateway's original location. The walls are covered with tenon heads of many styles , suggesting that the structure was reused for different purposes over time. What stands today is not the original configuration of the megaliths that comprise the Kalasasaya. Scholars believe it was originally constructed in a similar fashion as Stonehenge, with its stones spaced evenly apart and standing vertically.

Walls around the temple Kalasasaya at Tiwanaku: The Kalasasaya temple at Tiwanaku was used as a ceremonial center.

The quarries from which the stone blocks used in the construction of structures at Tiwanaku came lie at significant distances from this site, which has led scholars to speculate on how they could have been moved. One theory is that giant andesite stones weighing more than 40 tons were transported some 90 kilometers across Lake Titicaca on reed boats and then laboriously dragged another 10 kilometers to the city.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- aca-del-sol-ao-c3-bbt-2007.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Moche. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Erotic Moche Pot. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Moche. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Wari earthenware pot with painted design, 650-800 CE (Middle Horizon).. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Huari_-_Head_Pot_with_Painted_Design_-_Walters_482849_-_Three_Quarter_Right.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- zonnepoort-tiwanaku.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zonnepoort_tiwanaku.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Moche. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Moche. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nazca culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazca_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paracas culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paracas_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nazca culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazca_culture%23Arts_and_technology. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Andean. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Andean. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/phytomorphic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- geoglyph. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/geoglyph. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Paracas Textile. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/south-america-early/paracas-nasca/a/the-paracas-textile. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Backstrap Loom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Loom#/media/File:Backstrap_loom.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Detail of Paracas Textile. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/south-america-early/paracas-nasca/a/the-paracas-textile. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Andean. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Andean. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Loom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Loom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nazca Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazca_culture%23Arts_and_technology. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paracas Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paracas_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kalasasaya3.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiwanaku. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- zonnepoort-tiwanaku.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zonnepoort_tiwanaku.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chavin circular plaza cyark. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chavin_circular_plaza_cyark.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chavin de Huantar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chavin_de_Huantar.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tiwanaku. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiwanaku. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tiwanaku and Wari. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/7949. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chavin Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chavin_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gate of the Sun. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gate_of_the_Sun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chavin de Huantar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chavin_de_Huantar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chavin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chavin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 14.3: South America is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

14.4: North America

The Southwest

Southwestern indigenous cultures have produced a variety of architectural, artisanal, and ritual art forms for centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Anasazi, Hopi, Navajo, and Hohokam cultures of the American Southwest

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Anasazi, the ancestors of Pueblo Native American tribes, produced decorative pottery for storage purposes.
- Chaco Canyon in New Mexico (c. 10th century) is one of the most impressive early examples of Southwestern Native American architecture.
- The Navajo emigrated from Northern Canada to the Southwest sometime after 1000 CE. The sand paintings and weavings for which this culture is renowned are gender-specific. Men created sand paintings while women created weavings.
- Mastery of acid etching allowed the Hohokam culture to create lasting designs in bone, shell, and stone.

Key Terms

- **Anasazi**: A Native American people who once lived in cliff dwellings in Utah and Colorado.
- **Pueblo**: Modern and ancient communities of Native Americans in the Southwestern United States of America.
- **xeriscaping**: Landscaping and gardening that reduces or eliminates the need for supplemental water from irrigation.
- **Navajo**: Currently the largest Native American tribe in North America.

The Anasazi (1000 BCE–700 CE) are the ancestors of today's Pueblo tribes. Their culture formed in the American southwest after the cultivation of corn was introduced from Mexico around 1200 BCE. Additionally, the Navajo and Apache emigrated from Northern Canada to the Southwest sometime after 1000 CE. People of this region developed an agrarian lifestyle, cultivating food, storage gourds, and cotton with irrigation or xeriscaping techniques. They lived in sedentary towns, so pottery used to store water and grain was ubiquitous . For hundreds of years, the Anasazi created utilitarian grayware and black-on-white pottery as well as orange and red ceramics . Turquoise, jet, and spiny oyster shell were traditionally used by Ancestral Pueblo for jewelry and sophisticated inlay .

Anasazi Architecture

Southwest architecture includes cliff dwellings (multi-story settlements carved from living rock), pit houses, and adobe and sandstone pueblos. One of the most elaborate and largest ancient settlements is Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, which includes 15 major complexes of sandstone and timber connected by a network of roads. The largest of these settlements, Pueblo Bonito, contains over 800 rooms .

Pueblo Bonito: The impressive Pueblo Bonito was built by the Ancestral Puebloans as one of several settlements at Chaco Canyon.

Hopi Culture

The Hopi culture emerged in the Southwest in the fourteenth century. Hopi communities created ceramic jars, dough bowls, and food bowls of different sizes for daily use, as well as more elaborate ceremonial mugs, jugs, ladles, seed jars and vessels for ritual use. These were usually finished with polished surfaces and decorated with black painted designs.

Among Hopi ritual art is the kachina figure. This instructs young girls and new brides about katsinas or katsinam, the immortal beings that bring rain, control aspects of the natural world and society, and act as messengers between humans and the spirit world.

Hopi Kachina Figure: The Kachina figure originated in the 18th century as a flat object with an almost indistinguishable shape that suggested a head and contained minimal body paint. By the late 19th century, it assumed a more realistic appearance.

Navajo Culture

Art in the Navajo culture is traditionally gender-based. Men, seen as static in nature, create sand paintings for healing rituals. Because the pattern must be precise if the infirm person is to be cured, men were believed to be better suited for this work. Because sand paintings must be destroyed at the end of the ritual, tradition dictates that the designs not be photographed or otherwise documented. Women, on the other hand, were seen as more dynamic in nature and thus better suited for the creation of woven fabrics, such as blankets and rugs, whose patterns do not have to be exact. Unlike sand paintings, blankets and rugs are made to be long-lasting and therefore may be photographed.

Probably Bayeta-style Blanket with Terrace and Stepped Design: Navajo, 1870-80.

Hohokam Culture

Around 200 CE, the Hohokam culture developed in Arizona as the ancestors of the Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham or Pima tribes. The Hohokam are credited as the first culture to master acid etching. Artisans produced jewelry from shell, stone, bone, and carved stone figures. Pottery and textile production also flourished.

Hohokam Etched Shell: This shell was produced by the Hohokam culture of the Southwest.

Inuit Art

Inuit art is produced by the people of the Arctic, or Inuit people, who were previously known as Eskimos.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the Pre-Dorset, Dorset, Ipiutak, and Thule cultures of North America

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Around 4000 BCE, nomads known as the Pre-Dorset or the Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt) crossed over the Bering Strait from Siberia into Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Newfoundland. The Dorset culture became culturally distinct around 600 BCE.
- Walrus and narwhal ivory was historically the preferred material for carving sculptures, utensils, tools, and weapons among Pre-Dorset and Dorset artisans.
- The Dorset and Ipiutak communities that inhabited Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Newfoundland were displaced by the Thule population around 1000 CE.
- The Thule carved small, delicate versions of non- utilitarian crafts and ceremonial objects that were easily transportable. They also constructed homes from bones harvested from bowhead whales and other materials.

Key Terms

- **shaman**: A holy person believed to mediate between the physical world and the spirit world.

- **Nomad**: A member of a group of people who have no fixed home and move seasonally in search of food, water, and grazing.
- **Thule**: The ancestors of the Canadian Inuit.
- **Inuit**: Any of several Aboriginal peoples of coastal Arctic Canada, Alaska, and Greenland.

Inuit art refers to artwork produced by the people of the Arctic, or Inuit people, previously known as Eskimos. Inuit culture begins with the Pre-Dorset cultures as far back as 4000 BCE and spans through the present day.

Pre-Dorset and Dorset Cultures

Around 4000 BCE, nomads known as the Pre-Dorset or the Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt) crossed over the Bering Strait from Siberia into Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Newfoundland. Very little remains of this culture, and only a few preserved artifacts carved in ivory could be considered works of art.

The Dorset culture, which became culturally distinct around 600 BCE, produced a significant amount of figurative art using walrus ivory, bone, caribou antler, and on rare occasions, stone. Ivory from walruses and narwhals was the preferred material for carving utensils, tools, and weapons among Pre-Dorset and Dorset artisans. Subjects included birds, bears, walruses, seals, and human figures, as well as remarkably small masks. These items had a magical or religious significance, and were either worn as amulets to ward off evil spirits or used in shamanic rituals .

Carving of a polar bear: Dorset culture. Ivory. Alamek site, Iglulik, Canada.

Archaeology has been critical to knowledge of the Dorset people, who were essentially extinct by 1500 due to difficulty adapting to the Medieval Warming Period.

Ipiutak Culture

The Ipiutak culture represents a classical period of Inuit development. The culture arose between 100 and 200 BCE and collapsed around 800 CE. The artwork is extremely elaborate, incorporating geometric, animal, and anthropomorphic designs.

Ipiutak archaeological site at Point Hope in northwest Alaska: The Ipiutak culture arose c. 100–200 BCE and collapsed around 800 CE.

An Ipiutak archaeological site at Point Hope, Alaska, is renowned for its mortuary offerings , notably mask-like creations. One Point Hope Ipiutak mask represents a human face with a gaping mouth and blowfly larvae issuing from its nostrils, a symbol rife with shamanistic implications. The mask, which belonged to a child, contains a stylized mouth and eyebrows and a naturalistic nose, as if it had been modeled upon an actual face. Two pointed objects likely covered the eyes.

Child's Funerary Mask: Ipiutak. Point Hope, Alaska.

Thule Culture

Around 1000 CE, the people of the Thule culture, ancestors of today's Inuit, migrated from northern Alaska and either displaced or slaughtered the earlier Dorset inhabitants. By the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the Thule occupied an area currently inhabited by the Central Inuit, and by the fifteenth century, the Thule had fully replaced the Dorset culture. Contact with Europeans began in the 16th century and intensified in the 18th century. Compounded by the already disruptive effects of the "Little Ice Age" (1650–1850), the Thule communities broke apart, and the people became known as the Eskimos, and later as the Inuit.

Thule art had a definite Alaskan influence and included utilitarian objects such as combs, buttons, needle cases, cooking pots, ornate spears, and harpoons. The graphic decorations were purely ornamental, bearing no religious significance.

All Thule objects were made by hand from natural materials, including stone, bone, ivory, antler, and animal hides. Nomadic people carried tools necessary for daily living and could take very little else with them. Non-utilitarian objects were also carved in miniature so that they could be carried or worn, such as dance masks, amulets, fetish figures, and intricate combs and figures used to objectify their mythology and oral history.

The Classic Thule tradition (1100-1400) relied on the bowhead whale for survival since this species swims slowly and sleeps near the surface of the water. Bowhead whales served many purposes for the Thule people, including meat for food, blubber for oil (used in cooking, heating, and providing light), and bones for building structures and making tools. A Thule site in Resolute Bay , Nunavut, contains an example of a home with a whalebone frame.

An Ancient Thule Home Framed with Whalebone: Resolute Bay, Nunavut, Canada.

Woodlands in the East

Eastern Woodland cultures are known for their production of a variety of art forms, from pottery to substantial earthen mounds for burial.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish between the early, middle, and late Woodland periods of North America.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Woodland Period is divided into early, middle, and late periods , and consisted of cultures that relied mostly on hunting and gathering for subsistence.
- Pottery, stone carving and engraved shells are examples of the artwork of the shellfish-subsisting communities of the Early Woodland Period.
- The Middle Woodland Period from 200 to 500 CE is known for its jewelry and sculpture.
- The Late Woodland Period is traditionally framed as the decline for these hunter-gatherer communities, though many indigenous communities maintained similar lifestyles for several centuries.
- The agrarian Mississippian Culture emerged in the Southeast following the Late Woodland Period and is known for creating elaborate mounds, as well as ceramic innovation and work with shells and copper.
- Cahokia, a Mississippian site that extended from eastern Missouri to southern Illinois, is best known for its complex mound structure and the only copper workshop of the Woodland cultures.

Key Terms

- **mound builder**: Any of several Native American people who constructed large mounds for ceremonial or burial purposes.
- **long-nosed god maskette**: Small shield-shaped face with a squared-off forehead, circular eyes, and large nose.
- **anneal**: A technique that involves heating material until it glows, then slowly allowing to cool to room temperature in still air.
- **Mississippian**: A mound-building, agrarian Native American culture that flourished in what is now the Midwestern, Eastern, and Southeastern United States from approximately 800 to 1500 CE.
- **Southeastern Ceremonial Complex**: The name given to the regional stylistic similarity of artifacts, iconography, ceremonies, and mythology of the Mississippian culture that coincided with their adoption of maize agriculture and chiefdom-level complex social organization from 1200 to 1650 CE.

The Eastern Woodlands cultures inhabited the regions of North America east of the Mississippi River since at least 2500 BCE.

Contact and trade were common among the many regionally distinct Woodlands cultures. They shared the practice of burying their dead in earthen mounds, which preserved many cultural artifacts . Burial mounds in North America are part of an archetypal tradition that includes the pyramids of ancient Egypt. These structures begin on the ground and extend upward toward the sky, acting as a connection between the earthly plane and the spiritual plane. Because of this trait, the cultures are collectively known as the Mound Builders.

Grave Creek Mound: This mound located in modern Moundsville, West Virginia was built by the Adena culture.

Early Woodland Period

Clay for pottery was typically mixed with non-clay additives such as crushed rock or limestone . Traditional jars were conical, with rounded shoulders, slightly constricted necks, and flaring rims. Pottery was most often decorated with a variety of linear or paddle stamps that created dentate (tooth-like) impressions, wavy line impressions, checked surfaces, or fabric-impressed surfaces. Some pots were incised with geometric patterns or more rarely, pictorial imagery such as faces. Pots were coiled and paddled entirely by hand without the use of fast rotation such as a pottery wheel. Some were slipped or brushed with red ochre .

Harrington vessel: Ceramic vessel uncovered on Bussell Island, at the mouth of the Little Tennessee River in Loudon County, Tennessee. This pot belonged to the “Round Grave” culture, which corresponds roughly to the Late Archaic (c. 3000-1000 BCE) and Woodland periods. The pot’s diameter is approximately six inches.

Ceramics made by the Deptford culture (800 BCE-700 CE), inhabitants of the southern East Coast and Gulf Coast, are the earliest evidence of an artistic tradition in this region. The Adena culture is another well-known example. They carved stone tablets with zoomorphic designs, created pottery, and fashioned costumes from animal hides and antlers for ceremonial rituals . Shellfish was a mainstay of their diet, and engraved shells have been found in their burial mounds.

Middle Woodland Period

The Middle Woodland Period was dominated by cultures of the Hopewell tradition (200 to 500 BCE). Their artwork encompassed a wide variety of jewelry and sculpture in stone, wood, and even human bone. Mound City, located on Ohio Highway 104, is a group of 23 earthen mounds constructed by the Hopewell culture. Each mound within the group covered the remains of a charnel house. After the Hopewell people cremated the dead, they burned the charnel house and constructed a mound over the remains. They also placed artifacts such as copper figures, mica, projectile points, shells, and pipes in the mounds.

Hopewell Art: This unique Hopewell sculpture was carved from Mica between 200 BCE and 500 CE.

Late Woodland Period

The Late Woodland Period (500 to 1000 CE) saw a decline in trade and in the size of settlements, and the creation of art likewise declined. During this period, the nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle gradually gave way to an agrarian way of life.

The Mississippian culture flourished in what is now the Midwestern, Eastern, and Southeastern United States from approximately 800 to 1500 CE (following the Late Woodland Period). After adopting maize agriculture, the Mississippian culture became fully agrarian, as opposed to hunting and gathering supplemented by part-time agriculture practiced by preceding woodland cultures. They built larger and more complex platform mounds than those of their predecessors, and finished and developed more advanced ceramic techniques, commonly using ground mussel shell as a tempering agent. Many were involved with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC), a pan-regional and pan-linguistic religious and trade network. Most known information about the SECC is derived from examination of the elaborate artworks left behind by its participants, including pottery, shell gorgets and cups, stone statuary, copper plates such as the Wulfing cache , and long-nosed god maskettes .

Ceramic of Underwater Panther: This Mississippian culture ceramic effigy jug was found at Rose Mound in Cross County, Arkansas, and dates from 1400-1600.

Perhaps the most famous mound-building site from this period is Cahokia, which straddles the Mississippi River between the St. Louis, Missouri area and East St. Louis, Illinois. Cahokia was the largest and most influential urban settlement of the Mississippian culture and developed advanced societies across much of what is now the central and southeastern United States, beginning more than 1000 years before European contact. Cahokia's population at its peak in the thirteenth century was approximately 40,000.

Monks Mound is the largest structure and central focus of the city: a massive platform mound with four terraces, 10 stories tall, and the largest human-made earthen mound north of Mexico. The mound was built higher and wider over the course of several centuries through as many as ten separate construction episodes, and the terraces and apron were added.

Monks Mound: The concrete staircase is modern, but it is built along the approximate course of the original wooden stairs. Collinsville, IL.

While many Woodland cultures produced copper sculptures, Cahokia was the only Mississippian location to contain a copper workshop. The area contains the remains of three tree stumps thought to have been used to hold anvil stones. Analysis of copper found during excavations showed that it had been annealed. Artisans produced religious items, such as long-nosed god maskettes, ceremonial earrings with a symbolic shape thought to have been used in fictive kinship rituals.

Mississippian Culture repoussé copper plates: Three examples of Mississippian culture avian themed repoussé copper plates. The right-hand figure is one of the Spiro plates from Spiro Mounds in Oklahoma. The left-hand figure is Wulfing plate A, one of Wulfing cache from Malden, Missouri. The middle plate is Rogan plate 1, from Etowah Mounds in Georgia. Examples of this type of artwork have been found as artifacts in many states throughout the Midwest and Southeast.

By the time of European contact, the Mississippian societies were already experiencing severe social stress . With the social upsets and diseases introduced by Europeans, many of the societies collapsed and ceased to practice a Mississippian lifestyle, with the exception the Natchez people. Other tribes descended from Mississippian cultures include the Caddo, Choctaw, Muskogee Creek, Wichita, and many others.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 383px-Kachina_Doll_(Kokopol),_probably_late_19th_century,_04.297.5575.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34008942. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Probably_Bayeta-style_Blanket_with_Terrace_and_Stepped_Design,_1870-1880,_50.67.54.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34154061. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Chaco Culture National Historical Park. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaco_Culture_National_Historical_Park. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Hopi Kachina Figures. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hopi_Kachina_figures. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xeriscaping. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xeriscaping. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts by Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23Southwest. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hohokam. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohokam%23The_Hohokam_ceramic_tradition. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pueblo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pueblo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anasazi. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Anasazi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Navajo. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Navajo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ipiutak Site. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/f/fa/Ipiutak_Site.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Ancient_Thule_Home.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19171183. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Ours_nageant_(Musu00e9e_du_quai_Branly)_(3034045389).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24672985. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Masque_funu00e9raire_(musu00e9e_du_quai_Branly)_(3035743812).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24672970. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dorset Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorset_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inuit Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inuit_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thule People. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thule_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inuit. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Inuit. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nomad. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomad. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thule. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Thule. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mississippian culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippian_culture. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Hand Hopewell mica. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hand_Hopewell_mica.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Harrington-pottery-vessel-bussell-tn2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Harrington-pottery-vessel-bussell-tn2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Monks_Mound_in_July.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3019271. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Spiro_Wulfing_and_Etowah_repousse_plates_HRoe_2012.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19158593%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mound builder (people). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mound_builder_(people). **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hopewell_Culture_National_Historical_Park. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mound Builder. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mound_builder. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Deptford Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Deptford_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Woodland Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodland_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Annealing (Metallurgy). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Annealing_(metallurgy). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cahokia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cahokia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Poverty Point Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_Point_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts by Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23Eastern_Woodlands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Long-Nosed God Maskette. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Long-nosed_god_maskette. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mississippian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeastern%20Ceremonial%20Complex. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 14.4: North America is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Africa Before 1800 CE

15.1: Ancient Africa

15.2: Sculpture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations

15.3: Architecture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations

This page titled 15: Africa Before 1800 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

15.1: Ancient Africa

Ancient Africa

The origins of African art exist long before recorded history, beginning with the evolution of the human species. Over time, the continent became increasingly diverse in culture, politics, and religion.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the cultures of Ancient Africa

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The human species originated on the African continent, making it the oldest inhabited territory on Earth. It was here that cattle were first domesticated and metalworking invented. Climate change in the fifth millennium BCE triggered a migration to the western and tropical areas of the continent.
- For much of prehistory , Africa had no nation-states. The Egyptian civilization arose by the late fourth millenium BCE, impacting the northern part of the continent for the next 3,000 years. The fourth century BCE ushered in European exploration and conquest with Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE and the Roman conquest in the late first century BCE.
- The early seventh century CE witnessed the spread of Islam into North Africa and eventually into sub-Saharan Africa.
- Between the ninth and 18th centuries, Africa contained as many as 10,000 separate nation-states, as well as polities governed by units as small as familial clans.

Key Terms

- **Ife**: The first of the Yoruba city-states or kingdoms, which established government under a priestly oba (“king”).
- **Nri Kingdom of the Ig**: One of several independent kingdoms that developed in the forested regions of the West African coast.
- **San peopl**: Familial groups of hunter-gatherers in Southern Africa between the ninth and 18th centuries.
- **Hausa states**: The early dynastic states that had spread across Africa by the ninth century, including Ghana, Gao, and the Kanem-Bornu Empire.
- **Almoravids**: A Berber dynasty from the Sahara that spread over a wide area of northwestern Africa and the Iberian peninsula during the 11th century.
- **Banu Hilal and Banu Ma’qil**: A collection of Arab Bedouin tribes from the Arabian Peninsula who migrated westwards via Egypt between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Africa is considered the oldest inhabited territory on Earth, where the human species originated. During the middle of the 20th century, anthropologists discovered evidence of human occupation as early as seven million years ago. Their findings included fossil remains of early hominid species thought to be ancestors of modern humans.

Early Civilizations

Throughout humanity’s prehistory, Africa had no nation-states and was instead inhabited by groups of hunter-gatherers such as the Khoi and San. The domestication of cattle preceded agriculture. It is speculated that by 6,000 BCE, cattle were already domesticated in North Africa. In 4,000 BCE, climate change led to increasing desertification, which contributed to migrations of farming communities to the more tropical climate of West Africa.

By the first millennium BCE, ironworking began in Northern Africa and quickly spread across the Sahara into the northern parts of sub-Saharan Africa. By 500 BCE, metalworking was fully established in many areas of East and West Africa. Copper objects from Egypt, North Africa, Nubia, and Ethiopia dating from around 500 BCE have been excavated in West Africa, suggesting that trans-Saharan trade networks had been established by this date.

At about 3300 BCE, the Pharaonic civilization of Ancient Egypt came to power, a reign that lasted until 343 BCE. Egyptian influence reached deeply into modern Libya, north to Crete and Canaan, and south to the kingdoms of Aksum and Nubia.

European exploration of Africa began with Ancient Greeks and Romans. In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in Egypt, which would become the prosperous capital of the Ptolemaic dynasty after his death. Following the conquest of North Africa's Mediterranean coastline by the Roman Empire, the area was integrated economically and culturally into the Roman system. Christianity soon spread across the region.

In the early seventh century, the newly formed Arabian Islamic Caliphate expanded into Egypt and then into North Africa. Islamic North Africa became a diverse hub for mystics, scholars, jurists, and philosophers. Islam spread to sub-Saharan Africa, mainly through trade routes and migration.

Ninth to Eighteenth Centuries

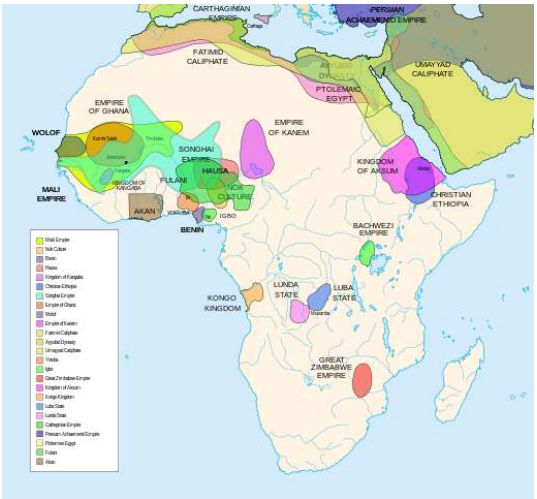
Precolonial Africa possessed as many as 10,000 different states and polities characterized by many sorts of political organization and rule. These included small family groups of hunter-gatherers, such as the San people of southern Africa; larger, more structured groups, such as the family clan groupings of the Bantu-speaking people of central and southern Africa; heavily structured clan groups in the Horn of Africa; the large Sahelian kingdoms; autonomous city-states and kingdoms such as those of the Akan; Edo , Yoruba , and Igbo peoples in West Africa; and the Swahili coastal trading towns of East Africa.

By the ninth century a string of dynastic states, including the earliest Hausa states, stretched across the sub-Saharan savanna from the western regions to central Sudan. The most powerful of these states were Ghana, Gao, and the Kanem-Bornu Empire. Ghana declined in the 11th century and was succeeded by the Mali Empire, which consolidated much of western Sudan in the 13th century. Kanem accepted Islam in the 11th century.

In the forested regions of the West African coast, independent kingdoms such as the Nri Kingdom of the Igbo grew up with little influence from the Muslim north. The Ife, historically the first of the Yoruba city-states or kingdoms, established government under a priestly oba ("king").

The Almoravids were a Berber dynasty from the Sahara that spread over a wide area of northwestern Africa and the Iberian peninsula during the 11th century. The Banu Hilal and Banu Ma'qil were a collection of Arab Bedouin tribes from the Arabian Peninsula who migrated westwards via Egypt between the 11th and 13th centuries. Following the breakup of Mali, the Songhai Empire was founded in middle Niger and the western Sudan. Its leader Sonni Ali and his successor Askia Mohammad I (1493–1528) made Islam the official religion, built mosques , and brought scholars to Gao Muslim.

Slavery had long been practiced in Africa. Between the seventh and 20th centuries, the Arab slave trade took 18 million slaves via the Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean routes. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, the Atlantic slave trade took an estimated seven to 12 million slaves to the New World .



Ancient African Kingdoms and Empires: This map depicts a sample of the diverse cultures, kingdoms, and empires of pre-colonial Africa.

Art of Ancient Africa

The art of ancient Africa is characterized by surviving sculptures, rock art, and architectural ruins.

Learning Objectives

Provide an overview of sculpture, architecture, and rock art produced by cultures of ancient Africa

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Africa is home to a rich history and diverse visual art. However, because most ancient art consisted of perishable materials, few works survive.
- Human and animal forms are common in ancient African art, appearing in rock art imagery and sculptures in the round. Some cultures influenced the art of Europeans with whom they had contact.
- While abstraction and stylization dominated the art of ancient Africa, some cultures produced strikingly naturalistic depictions of human heads, snail shells, and other organic forms.
- Ancient architecture tended to be load-bearing and constructed from a variety of durable and perishable materials.
- A rare surviving example of two-dimensional art, rock art provides a glimpse into a northern Africa that was a grassland as opposed to its modern desert.

Key Terms

- **votive**: Dedicated or given in fulfillment of a vow or pledge.

African art constitutes one of the most diverse legacies on earth. Though many casual observers tend to generalize “traditional” African art, the continent consists of a breadth of people, societies, and civilizations , each with a unique visual culture. As the birthplace of the human species, Africa is the home of some of the oldest existing art forms. But because most were produced from wood and other highly perishable materials, few artworks produced before the 19th century survive. Examples include terra cotta sculptures, rock carvings, and architectural ruins.

The art of ancient African was just as diverse as its cultures, languages, and political structures. Most cultures preferred abstract and stylized forms of humans, plants, and animals, but they had a range of distinct approaches and techniques. Some cultures preferred more naturalistic depictions of human faces and other organic forms.

The Nubian Kingdom of Kush in modern Sudan was in close and often hostile contact with Egypt, and produced monumental sculpture mostly derivative of styles that did not spread to the north. In West Africa, the earliest known sculptures are from the Nok culture, which thrived between 500 BCE and 500 CE in modern Nigeria. These clay figures typically had elongated bodies and angular shapes.

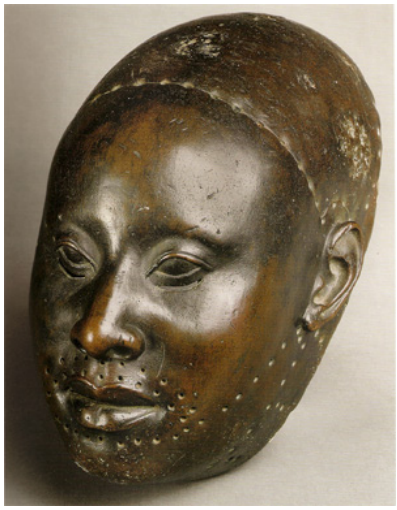
Nok Rider and Horse, 53 cm tall (1,400 to 2,000 years ago): The Nok culture appeared in Nigeria around 1000 BCE and vanished under unknown circumstances around 500 CE in the region of West Africa, in modern Northern and Central Nigeria. Scholars think its social system was highly advanced. The Nok culture was the earliest sub-Saharan producer of life-sized terra cotta.

Human and Animal Forms

The human figure has always been a primary subject of African art, and this emphasis even influenced certain European traditions. For example, in the 15th century, Portugal traded with the Sapi culture near Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa, whose residents created elaborate ivory saltcellars that were hybrids of African and European designs. This was most notable in the addition of the human figure, which typically did not appear in Portuguese saltcellars. European subjects can be distinguished by their clothing and hairstyles. The human figure might symbolize the living or the dead. Possible subjects include chiefs, dancers, drummers, or hunters. They might be anthropomorphic representations of gods or ancestors or even have votive functions.

Saltcellar, 16th Century: Saltcellar by an Edo or Yoruba artist representing a Portuguese man decorated with horses among geometric patterns.

Even before contact with the Europeans, some African cultures opted for naturalistic depictions over the dominant preference for abstraction and stylization. This can be seen in the Yoruba portrait bronzes of Ile-Ife, which include indented and incised details that might represent ritual scarification .



Yoruba head: Bronze. Ile-Ife. Twelfth century.

The bronzes of Igbo-Ukwu pay special attention to detail depicting birds, snails, chameleons, and other natural aspects of the world. The objects are so fine that small insects were included on some surfaces. Each bronzes was produced in one piece.

Ceremonial vessel: Bronze. Igbo-Ukwu. Ninth century.

Architecture and Saharan Rock Art

Architectural ruins in locations such as Mali and Zimbabwe demonstrate the popularity of load-bearing architecture in such diverse materials as adobe and stone. In areas like Mali and Igbo-Ukwu, buildings constructed from perishable materials continue to be built or rebuilt in traditional styles that provide a window into the past.

Painted and incised scenes on caves, boulders, and other rock formations in the Sahara provide a glimpse of life in this now-desert region when it was a grassland with ample water supplies over 10,000 years ago. Imagery includes scenes such as farming, hunting, and swimming.

Rock Art in the Sahara

Ancient rock art in the Sahara provides a window into the art and culture of the prehistoric peoples of Africa.

Learning Objectives

Define rock art and locate examples such as the Cave of Swimmers, Tassili n'Ajjer, and Jebel Uweinat.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

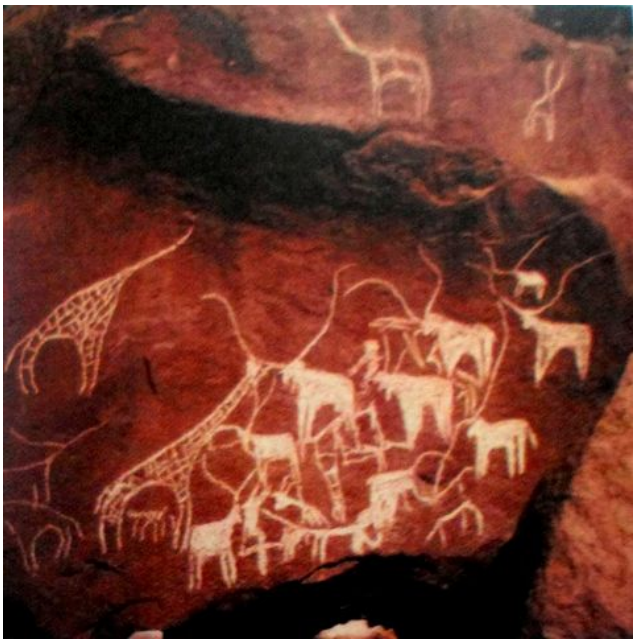
- The Sahara, located in northern Africa, was the home of many complex human settlements dating from the Neolithic period.
- Images carved and painted on natural rocks depict vibrant and vivid scenes from the Neolithic period, such as animals, hunting, and dancing.
- Among the most famous sites are the Cave of Swimmers in Libya, Tassili n'Ajjer in Algeria, and Jebel Uweinat near the border of Libya, Egypt, and Sudan.

Key Terms

- **pictograph**: A painting or drawing on a rock face, typically made with mineral earths and other natural compounds.
- **pastoralist**: A person involved in raising livestock.
- **petroglyph**: An engraving or carving into a rock face, usually created with a hammerstone, chisel, or fine metal blade.

Ancient rock and cave art can be found throughout the Sahara desert, providing a significant window into the art and culture of the prehistoric peoples of Africa. The Sahara, located in northern Africa, was the home of many complex human settlements dating from the Neolithic period. The region has a long history of climate change, and the desert area of today was once a savanna. Images carved and painted on natural rocks depict vibrant and vivid scenes from the Neolithic Subpluvial period. Most Saharan rock art dates to a period that climatologists call the Neolithic Subpluvial period. This was the most recent of a number of periods known as

"Wet Sahara" or "Green Sahara," during which the region was much less arid and supported a richer biota and human population than the modern desert.



Petroglyph at Balho, Djibouti: Djibouti lies on the eastern edge of the Sahara desert, which has not supported foliage-dependent animals such as giraffes for approximately 10,000 years. This image informs us that the Sahara was once a grassland that contains plant life similar to that of modern sub-Saharan Africa.

Most rock art depicts hunting scenes, but others include animals, dancing, and people involved in everyday life. With the help of these pictographs and petroglyphs , archaeologists and scientists can piece together information about the complex societies that once inhabited the region.

The Cave of the Swimmers

The Cave of Swimmers is among the most famous examples of rock art in the Sahara. Located in the mountainous Gilf Kebir plateau of the Libyan Desert, the cave and its art were discovered in 1933 by the Hungarian explorer László Almásy. It contains Neolithic pictographs of people swimming estimated to have been created between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago, when wet climatic conditions maintained bodies of water deep enough for swimming and diving.

Cave of the Swimmers, Egypt: Painting of men swimming in the Cave of the Swimmers, Wadi Sura, Gilf Kebir, Western Desert, Egypt.

Tassili n'Ajjer

Tassili n'Ajjer is a mountain range in the Algerian section of the Sahara Desert, noted for its prehistoric rock art depicting herds of cattle, large wild animals such as antelopes, and human activities such as hunting and dancing. The art has strong stylistic links to the pre-Nguni Art of South Africa, executed in caves by the San Peoples before the year 1200 BCE. First discovered in 1933, more than 15,000 petroglyphs have been identified at Tassili n'Ajjer.

Sleeping antelope: Petroglyph depicting a sleeping antelope, located at Tin Taghirt on the Tassili n'Ajjer in southern Algeria.

Hunters or pastoralists: Neolithic cave painting of either hunters or pastoralists during the Neolithic Subpluvial period. Tassil n'Ajjer (Plateau of the Chasms).

Jebel Uweinat

Jebel Uweinat is a large mountain made of granite and sandstone located at the borders of Libya, Egypt, and Sudan. It harbors one of the richest concentrations of prehistoric rock art in the entire Sahara, mainly of the Neolithic cattle pastoralist cultures, but also a number of older paintings from hunter-gatherer societies.

Other important regions of rock art include Tadrart Acacus, Libya; South Oran, Algeria; Tibesti, Chad; Mesak Settafet, Libya; Djelfa, Algeria; Ahaggar, Algeria; Draa River, Morocco; Figuig, Morocco; the Aïr Mountains, Niger, and throughout Mauritania. One petroglyph in Mauritania depicts pastoralists on horseback as they tend their livestock.

Livestock petroglyph: Mauritanian Petroglyph of bovine animals and abstract people on horseback.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 515px-African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2660560. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African Empires. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_empires. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Africa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Bronze_ceremonial_vessel_in_form_of_a_snail_shell,_9th_century,_Igbo-Ukwu,_Nigeria.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29327236. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yoruba-bronze-head.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4438424. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- A man ride a horse,Nok terracotta figurine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:A_man_ride_a_horse,Nok_terracotta_figurine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 480px-Lisboa-Museu_Nacional_de_Arte_Antiga-Saleiro-20140917.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38165614%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Saharan Rock Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saharan_rock_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kingdom of Nri. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Nri#Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yoruba People. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people#Traditional_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Votive. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/votive. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- WadiSuraHumans. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:WadiSuraHumans.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mauritania_Herders.jpg. **Provided by**: Flickr. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/gbaku/469184511. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 478px-Rock_art_at_Balho.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35163887. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Sleeping_Antelope_Tin_Taghirt.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14842019. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- African_cave_paintings.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6006212. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Neolithic Subpluvial. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic_Subpluvial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jebel Uweinat. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jebel_Uweinat. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rock Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saharan Rock Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saharan_rock_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tassili n'Ajjer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tassili_n'Ajjer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cave of Swimmers. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_of_Swimmers. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pastoralist. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pastoralist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pictograph. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/pictograph. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Petroglyph. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/petroglyph. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 15.1: Ancient Africa is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

15.2: Sculpture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations

Sculpture of the Nok

Two of the best examples of ancient terra cotta sculptures are from the Nok culture in Nigeria and from an ancient culture who lived near modern Lydenburg, South Africa.

Learning Objectives

Compare the ancient terra cotta sculptures from the Nok culture in Nigeria to those found near present-day Lydenburg, South Africa

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Nok culture , existing in Nigeria from around 1500 BCE to 200 CE, was the earliest sub-Saharan producer of life-sized terra cotta sculptures.
- The large Nok sculptures are hollow, with detailed, stylized features. Striking similarities between terra cotta Nok sculptures and later wooden sculptures by Yoruba sculptors have led scholars to speculate whether the two cultures are related.
- While the function of Nok sculptures is largely unknown, theories include use as grave markers, ancestral portrayal, or charms to protect against crop failure, infertility, or illness.
- The Lydenburg Heads are human-shaped terra cotta sculptures discovered in Lydenburg, South Africa. Their image has since become associated with awards for achievement in the arts.

Key Terms

- **terra cotta**: A hard red-brown unglazed earthenware, used for pottery and building construction.
- **finial**: Any decorative fitting at the peak of a flagpole, fence post or staircase newel post.

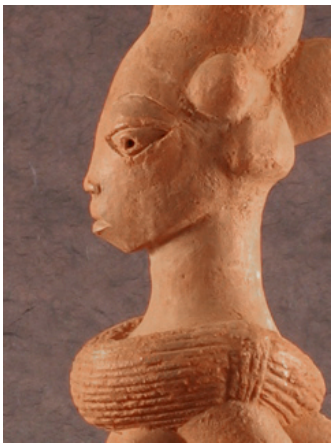
The earliest identified Nigerian culture is the Nok culture, which thrived between 1500 BCE and 200 CE on the Jos Plateau in northeastern Nigeria. Information is lacking from the first millennium BCE following the Nok ascendancy. However, by the second millennium BCE, active trade routes had developed from Ancient Egypt via Nubia through the Sahara to the forest. Savanna peoples acted as intermediaries in exchanges of various goods. Reasons for the Nok's sudden disappearance remains unknown.

Nok and Lydenburg Terra Cotta Sculptures

Ancient terra cotta sculptures in the form of human bodies or heads have been found in several areas of sub-Saharan Africa, providing glimpses into the cultures that existed in the region. Two of the best examples are from the Nok culture in present-day Nigeria and from an ancient culture living near the present-day town of Lydenburg, South Africa.

Nok

Similarities in artwork suggest the Nok culture evolved into the later Yoruba culture of Ife. One example is this sculpture of a woman, which bears a striking resemblance to an early 20th-century sculpture of a king and queen mother by the Yoruba artist Olowe of Ise. The Nok culture was the earliest sub-Saharan producer of life-sized terra cotta sculptures.



Female figurine: Terra cotta. 48 cm tall. Nok culture. c. 515-1215 CE.

The first scattered fragments were discovered on the Jos Plateau during a tin mining expedition in 1928. The terra cotta figures are hollow, and while some include plant and animal motifs , the most well-known are of human heads and bodies that often reach life-sized proportions. These human sculptures contain very detailed and stylized features, abundant jewelry, and varied postures. Some even illustrate physical ailments, disease, or facial paralysis. While their function is largely unknown, theories include use as ancestor portrayal, grave markers, finials for roofs of buildings, or charms to protect against crop failure, infertility, or illness.

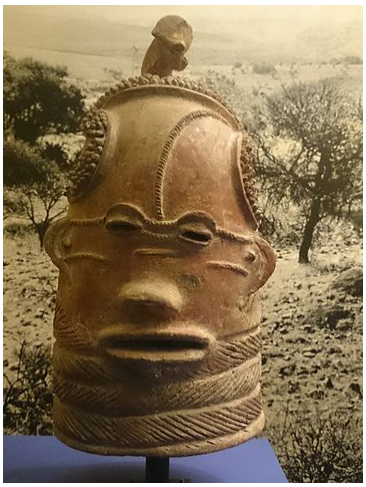
Nok Sculpture: Nok sculptures may have been used as grave markers, charms, or portrayals of ancestors. Terra cotta. Sixth century BCE-sixth century CE. Nigeria.

Researchers suggest that Nok ceramics were likely shaped by hand from coarse-grained clay and then sculpted with a technique similar to wood carving. After drying, the sculptures were covered with slip and polished to produce a smooth, glossy surface. The firing process probably resembled that used today in Nigeria, in which the sculptures are covered with grass, twigs, and leaves and burned for several hours.

Lydenburg

Lydenburg, a town in Mpumalanga, South Africa, is also known for the discovery of some of the earliest forms of African sculpture. The Lydenburg Heads (400-500 CE) are terra cotta sculptures similar to those of the Nok. Found in the area in the late

1950s, their function is still unknown, although they likely served a ritualistic purposes as masks, ornamentation, or part of ceremonial regalia.



Lyndenburg Head: The Lydenburg Heads are the earliest known examples of African sculpture in Southern Africa. Two of the heads are large enough to have been ceremonial helmet masks. The five smaller heads have a hole on either side of the neck, by which they could have been attached to a pole or costume during a performance. One of the small heads has an animal-like nose and mouth, which would have been of symbolic importance to the makers of the heads.

Since their discovery, these heads have come to symbolize African art and won multiple awards. The image of the Lydenburg head can be seen both on the badge given by the South African Order of Ikhamanga representing achievement in the arts and in the Golden Horn trophy of the South African Film and Television Awards, which signifies excellence in visual creative arts, performance, and drama.

The Order of Ikhamanga: An image of the Order of Ikhamanga, where the Lydenburg head can be seen in the center.

Sculpture of the Igbo-Ukwu

The Nigerian town of Igbo-Ukwu is notable for archaeological sites where highly sophisticated bronze artifacts were discovered.

Learning Objectives

Describe the discovery, production, and function of Igbo bronze art, masquerades, sculptures, and mbari

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Excavations in Igbo-Ukwu have found highly sophisticated bronze artifacts from the earliest known age of bronze casting , dating to the ninth or tenth century CE.
- The three sites were discovered from 1938-1959 and include Igbo Isaiah (a shrine), Igbo Richard (a burial chamber), and Igbo Jonah (a cache).
- These artifacts are likely from the burial of a highly important person. They include ritual vessels , pendants, crowns and breastplates, jewelry, ceramics , copper and iron objects, and thousands of glass beads.

- The bronze castings, made in stages using the lost wax technique, illustrate the artisans' high level of skill.
- In addition to the artifacts at Igbo-Ukwu, the Igbo people are known for hammered jewelry, masks, Mbari houses, and mud sculptures.

Key Terms

- **cache**: A store of things that may be required in the future such as food, which can be retrieved rapidly but is protected or hidden in some way.

Igbo-Ukwu, a town of the Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria, is notable for three archaeological sites where excavations have found bronze artifacts from a sophisticated metal-working culture dating to the ninth or tenth century. This is the earliest known example of a bronze-casting society in the region by hundreds of years.

The first of the sites, Igbo Isaiah, is a shrine uncovered in 1938 by Isaiah Anozie, a local villager who stumbled upon the bronze works while digging beside his home. Subsequent excavations by Thurston Shaw in 1959 resulted in the discovery of two other sites: Igbo Richard, a burial chamber, and Igbo Jonah, thought to be a cache.

Some metal objects were hammered into their current forms , including many pieces of jewelry. A woman's anklet now housed in the British Museum consists of a central leg tube that extends over an inch beyond the center (approximately 2.75 inches in diameter). Its disk is incised with intricate abstract designs.

Igbo brass anklet: Anklet beaten from a solid brass bar.

Igbo Bronze Art

Most bronze sculptures were made in stages using the lost wax technique, an ancient casting process commonly using wax. Many of the castings integrated small decorative items and designs, showing the artisans' high level of skill. Some of the bronzes were likely part of the furniture in the burial chamber of a king or other noble. In addition to a variety of ritual vessels, bronze items include pendants, crowns and breastplates, staff ornaments , swords, and fly-whisk handles .

Human and ram's head pendants : The elaborate designs and casting in bronzes such as this one point to the Igbo people's high level of skill.

Igbo Ukwu bronze: A ceremonial vessel made around the ninth century CE.

Other artifacts discovered in the sites include jewelry, ceramics, a corpse adorned in what appears to be regalia, and many assorted copper and iron objects. Tens of thousands of glass beads were also discovered, suggesting a long-distance trading system with places as far away as Egypt, Venice , or India.

Other Examples of Igbo Art

Prior to British colonialism , the Igbo were a fragmented and diverse group, a quality reflected in its artistic styles . Besides the bronze artifacts discovered in the twentieth century, Igbo art is generally known for various types of masquerade masks and outfits symbolizing people, animals, or abstract images. The New Yam Festival is an annual cultural festival held at the end of the rainy season in early August to symbolize the conclusion of a harvest and the beginning of the next work cycle. The celebration ties individual Igbo communities together as essentially agrarian and dependent on yam.

New Yam Festival: On the right, a participant wears an elaborate mask and headdress with attire made of raffia. The festival in this photograph was organized by Igbo residents of Dublin, Ireland.

Igbo art is also famous for *Mbari houses*, large open-sided square planned shelters containing life-sized mud sculptures. These painted figures–sculpted in the form of deities , animals, legendary creatures, ancestors, officials, craftsmen, and foreigners–are made to appease the earth goddess. The process of building Mbari houses often takes years and is regarded as sacred. Therefore, new ones are regularly constructed, while old ones are left to decay.

Construction of a *Mbari* house: Detail of the upper level and roof.

A unique structure of Igbo culture is the *Nsude Pyramids* , a group of ten pyramidal clay and mud structures built as temples for the goddess *Ala/Uto*, believed to reside at the top. Everyday houses were made of mud and thatched roofs and had bare earth floors with carved doors. Some houses had elaborate designs both in the interior and exterior, including Uli art designed by Igbo women.

Ile-Ife and Benin Sculpture

The Yoruba and Benin cultures produced bronze and ivory sculptures in modern Nigeria from the 13th through the 19th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Ile-Ife and Benin sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ife is home to the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria. The city was established near the ninth century CE, and reached its artistic peak between 1200 and 1400 CE.
- Ife is most well-known for its bronze sculptures, typically in a naturalistic style . Stone and terra cotta artwork was also common, and leaders were often depicted with large heads to indicate their power.
- The Benin Empire, which ruled Nigeria from the 11th to the late 19th century, produced sculptures in a wide variety of media for political, social, and religious purposes.

- In the 15th century, contact with Portuguese traders and colonists resulted in the incorporation of European styles into Benin art.

Key Terms

- **terra cotta**: A hard red-brown unglazed earthenware used for pottery and building construction.
- **deities**: Divine beings; gods or goddesses.

Yoruba

Ife is the home to the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, located in the present-day Osun State. The Yoruba people comprise one of the largest ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, constituting close to 40 million people predominantly in Nigeria. Evidence of habitation at the site dates to as early as 600 BCE. Some evidence suggests the Yoruba developed from the Nok culture (1000 BCE–500 CE).

The meaning of the word “ife” in Yoruba is “expansion.” According to Yoruba faith, the city of Ife is where all of humanity originated: *Oduduwa* created the world where Ife would be built, and his brother *Obatala* created the first humans out of clay. The city was a settlement of substantial size between the ninth and 12th centuries CE. Production of Yoruba artwork reached its peak between 1200 and 1400 CE, after which it declined as political and economic power shifted to the nearby kingdom of Benin.

Artwork of Ife

Ife is best known for its naturalistic bronze sculptures. Hollow-cast bronze art created by the Yoruba culture provides an example of realism in precolonial African art. Important people were often depicted with large heads, as the Yoruba believed that the *Ase*, or inner power and energy of a person, resided in the head. Their rulers were often depicted with their mouths covered so that the power of their speech would not be too great .

Ife Bronze Sculpture: Sculpture of a king’s head, held in the British Museum.

Stone and terra cotta artwork were also common in Ife. More elaborate festivals organized to worship deities were also common. These would often extend over several days and involve theatrical dramatizations in the palace and kingdom.

In his book “The Oral Traditions in Ile-Ife,” Yemi D. Prince referred to the terra cotta artists of 900 CE as the founders of art guilds , cultural schools of philosophy similar to Europe’s old institutions of learning. These guilds may be some of the oldest non-Abrahamic African centers of learning still in existence.

Benin

The Benin Empire was a precolonial African kingdom that ruled Nigeria from the eleventh century to 1897. Not to be confused with the present-day country of Benin, this empire dissolved into what is today the Edo State of Nigeria, marked by the capital , Benin City. At its height, the empire developed an advanced artistic culture and produced beautiful artifacts of bronze, iron and ivory .

Art of Benin

The Benin Empire was known for its many works of art, including religious objects, ceremonial weapons, masks, animal heads, figurines , busts, and plaques. Typically made from bronze, brass, clay, ivory, terra cotta, or wood, most pieces were produced at the court of the Oba (king) and used to illustrate achievements of the empire or narrate mythical stories. Iconic imagery depicted religious, social, and cultural issues central to their beliefs, and many bronze plaques featured representations of the Oba.

Various works promoted theological and religious piety, while others narrated past events and achievements (actual or mythical). During the reign of the Kingdom of Benin, the characteristics of the artwork shifted from thin castings and careful treatment to thick, less defined castings and generalized features.

Sculpture of the Benin Kingdom: This sculpture, one of the many examples of Benin Bronzes held in museums around the world, depicts the generalized figures that frequently appear in Benin art. 16th-18th century. Nigeria.

One of the most common artifacts today is the ivory mask based on Queen Idia, the mother of Oba Esigie who ruled from 1504-1550. Now commonly known as the Festac mask, it was used in 1977 as the logo of the Nigeria-hosted Second Festival of Black & African Arts and Culture.

Pendant ivory mask of Queen Idia: Iyoba ne Esigie (meaning: Queen mother of Oba Esigie), court of Benin, 16th century.

Another object unique to Benin art is the Ikegobo ("altars to the hand"), a cylindrical votive object. Used as a cultural marker of an individual's accomplishments, Ikegobo were dedicated to the hand, from which the Beninese considered all will for wealth and success to originate. These commemorative objects were made of brass, wood, terra cotta, or clay depending on the patron 's hierarchical ranking.

Portuguese Influence

The peak of the Benin art occurred in the fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries and traders. By that point, Benin was already highly militarized and economically developed. However, the arrival of the Portuguese catalyzed a process of even greater political and artistic development.

Because of Benin's military strength, Portuguese missionaries were unable to enslave its people upon their arrival in the fifteenth century. Instead, a trade network was established in which the Benin Empire traded beautiful works of art for luxury items from Portugal, such as beads, cloth, and brass manillas for casting. The wealth of Benin's art was credited with preventing the empire from becoming economically dependent on the Portuguese.

As trade flourished, Benin art began to depict European influence through technique, imagery, and themes. Bronze work reached its height during this era, and today the Benin Bronzes are regarded as some of the finest works of that time. These depict a variety of scenes including animals, court life, Portuguese sailors, and relationships between the Benin Empire and the Portuguese. They were cast in matching pairs (although each was individually made), and may have originally been nailed to walls and pillars in the palace as decoration.

Benin plaque: The background portrays the floral pattern characteristic of plaques made at this time and reflective of Portuguese influence. The image in the plaque consists of an Oba (king) surrounded by his subjects. Apart from military and political strength, the plaque illustrates the relationship between the Portuguese and the Benin traders. 16th century.

In 1897, the British led the Punitive Expedition in which they ransacked the Benin kingdom and destroyed or confiscated much of their artwork. Over 3,000 brass plaques were seized and are now held in museums around the world.

In 1936, Oba Akenzua II began a movement to return the art to its place of origin. Nigeria bought approximately 50 bronzes from the British Museum between the 1950s and 1970s and has repeatedly called for the return of the remainder.

Sculpture of the Kingdom of Kongo

The Kingdom of Kongo was a highly developed state in the 13th century, best known for its *nkisi* (power objects).

Learning Objectives

Discuss the function of Kongolese *nkisi* and *nkondi*

Key Takeaways

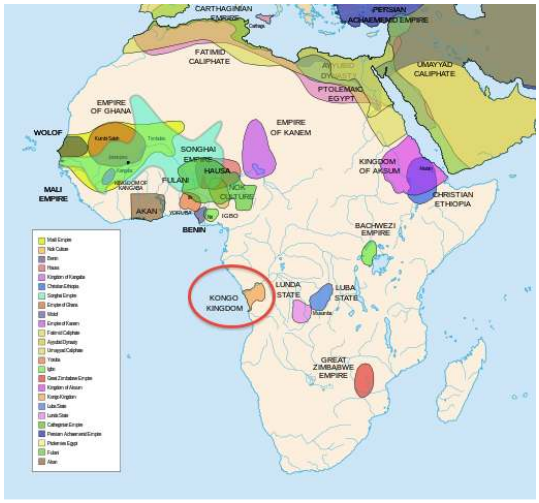
Key Points

- The Kingdom of Kongo was first established in the 13th century and was a highly developed state by the time of European contact.
- Kongo had an extensive trading network that included ivory , copperware, ferrous metal goods, cloth, and pottery.
- *Nkisi* are containers such as ceramic vessels , gourds, animal horns, or shells designed to hold spiritually-charged substances. They were believed to aid in communication with the dead.
- *Nkisi* made in the shape of humans or animals were often used in divination practices for healing or good fortune.
- *Nkondi*, whose etymological root comes from the word meaning "to hunt," are believed to protect the user from forces of evil.

Key Terms

- **ferrous**: Iron-based.
- **anthropomorphic**: Having the form or attributes of a human.
- **zoomorphic**: Having the shape, form, or likeness of an animal.

The Kingdom of the Kongo was an African kingdom located in west central Africa in what is now northern Angola, Cabinda, the western portion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the southernmost part of Gabon. At its greatest extent, it reached from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Kwango River in the east, and from the Congo River in the north to the Kwanza River in the south.



Map of Precolonial Africa: The Kingdom of Kongo is circled in red.

The first king of the Kingdom was Lukeni lua Nimi (circa 1280-1320). By the time of the first recorded contact with the Europeans, the kingdom was a highly developed state at the center of an extensive trading network. Apart from natural resources and ivory, the country manufactured and traded copperware, ferrous metal goods, raffia cloth, and pottery. The eastern regions were particularly famous for cloth production.

An example of Kongo pottery: Made of ceramic and vegetable dye, such pottery was widely manufactured in the Kingdom of Kongo.

Artistically, the Kingdom of Kongo is perhaps best known for its *nkisi* (singular: *minkisi*), objects believed to be inhabited by spirits. Early travelers often called *nkisi* “fetishes” or “idols,” as some were made in human form . Modern anthropology has generally called them either “power objects” or “charms.” As in many African cultures , the Kongo religion placed great importance on communication with ancestors, believing that exceptional human powers could result from this communication. *Nkisi* were containers such as ceramic vessels, gourds, animal horns, or shells, designed to hold spiritually charged substances. Sometimes considered “portable graves,” elements like earth or relics from the grave of a powerful individual were often placed in the bellies of *nkisi*. The powers of the dead thus infused the object, placing it under control of the *ngaga* (healer, diviner, or mediator).

Nkisi were often used in divination practices, for healing, or for good fortune in hunting, trade, or sex. Most famously, *nkisi* take the form of anthropomorphic or zoomorphic wooden carvings. Birds of prey, dogs (closely tied to the spiritual world in Kongo theology), lightning, weapons, and fire are all common themes. The substances chosen for inclusion in *nkisi* are frequently called “*bilongo*” or “*milongo*” (singular *nlongo*) a word often translated as “medicine.” However, their operation was not primarily pharmaceutical, as they were not applied to or ingested by the infirm. Rather, they were frequently chosen for metaphoric reasons, such as correcting illicit behavior.

Minkisi: The light area on the figure's abdomen is a glass "window" that would hold "medicine" used for correcting illicit or immoral behavior.

Nkondi – often referred to as "nail fetishes" – are an aggressive type of *nkisi* that were thought to be activated by having nails driven into them. Each nail or metal piece represented a vow, a signed treaty, and efforts to abolish evil. Although *nkisi nkondi* have probably been made since at least the 16th century, the nailed figures were most likely made in the northern part of the Kongo in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Female power figure of the Vili people – Democratic Republic of Congo: While this figure was made by the Vili people, it is similar to the *nkisi nkondi* made by people in the Kongo Kingdom.

The name *nkondi* derives from the verb *-konda*, meaning "to hunt" and thus *nkondi* means "hunter" because they can hunt down and attack evildoers or enemies. The object's primary function is to house a spirit that can hunt down the source or sources of evil that threaten an individual or an entire village. While some *nkondi* figures appear relatively benign, like the example above, others assume more aggressive body language and facial expressions to demonstrate their ability to attack evildoers successfully.

Minkisi nkondi: This figure assumes a more aggressive facial expression and body language.

Some *nkondi* assume zoomorphic forms, such as this sculpture of a protective wild animal.

Detail of a zoomorphic nkondi: Wood, metal, and porcelain. Eighteenth-nineteenth century.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 360px-Iziko_Lydenburg_Heads_2.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=33704580. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Order of Ikhamanga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Order_of_Ikhamanga.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nok sculpture Louvre 70-1998-11-1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nok_sculpture_Louvre_70-1998-11-1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nok_terracotta_figurine.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3290149. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early History of Nigeria. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_history_of_Nigeria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lyndenburg Heads. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydenburg_heads. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Olowe of Ise. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olowe_of_Ise. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Terracotta. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/terracotta. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- South African Film and Television Awards. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Film_and_Television_Awards. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nok Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nok_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lydenburg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydenburg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Order of Ikhamanga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Ikhamanga. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Finial. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/finial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Igbo_Mbari.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6441276. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 555px-Igbo_brass_anklet.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Igbo_brass_anklet.jpg#/media/File:Igbo_brass_anklet.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo ukwu bronzes. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Igbo_ukwu_bronzes.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-NewYam-IgboFestival-Dublin.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5090508. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo Ukwu vessel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Igbo_Ukwu_vessel.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mbari (Art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mbari_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nsude Pyramids. **Provided by**: Afropedea. **Located at**: http://www.afropedea.org/nsude-pyramids. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pyramid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid#Nigeria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ala (Odinani). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ala_(odinani). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New Yam Festival of the Igbo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Yam_Festival_of_the_Igbo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Archaeology of Igbo-Ukwu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeology_of_Igbo-Ukwu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo-Ukwu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo-Ukwu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cache. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cache. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- nin-kingdom-louvre-a97-4-1.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_kingdom_Louvre_A97-4-1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-benin-bronzes.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_Bronzes.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 220px-edo-ivory-mask-18472.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edo_ivory_mask_18472.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ife Kings Head. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ife_Kings_Head.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Benin. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/6426. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Benin Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Benin. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/6633. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Benin ivory mask. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin_ivory_mask. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ife. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ife. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Terracotta. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/terracotta. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Deities. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/deities. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Statue_vili-Congo.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19637074. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 250px-Nkisi_Nkondi,_Congo,_c._1880-1920_-_IMG_1628.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11321400. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 515px-African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2660560. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 332px-Brooklyn_Museum_87.218.117_Figure_Nkisi.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22509721. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Female Power Figure (Nkisi Nkonde). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Female_Power_Figure_(Nkisi_Nkonde).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bowl by the Kongo peoples. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bowl_by_the_Kongo_peoples.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nkondi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nkondi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kongo People. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kongo_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kingdom of Kongo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Kongo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nkisi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nkisi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anthropomorphic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/anthropomorphic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zoomorphic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/zoomorphic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 15.2: Sculpture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

15.3: Architecture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations

Architecture of Djenne

Djenné, once a thriving town in Mali, is known for its Great Mosque. This is the largest example of Sudanese-style mud-brick architecture.

Learning Objectives

Locate Djenné in time and place, and describe its Sudanese-style mud-brick architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- From the 11th to 13th centuries, Djenné was a leading commercial center in west Africa. After its decline during the rise of the Mali Empire, it continued to operate as an important trading post through the 17th century.
- The town, designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988, is famous for its distinctive Sudanese- style mud-brick architecture.
- The Great Mosque , originally built in the 13th or 14th century and then rebuilt in 1907, is the largest mud brick building in the world. It is considered by many architects the greatest achievement of the Sudano-Sahelian architectural style, with clear Islamic influence.

Key Terms

- **pilaster**: A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached; it gives the appearance of support, but is only for decoration.
- **façade**: The face of a building, especially the front.
- **load-bearing**: Architectural structural system in which the walls form the main source of support for the building.
- **qibla**: The direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during the Call to Prayer.
- **minaret**: A tower outside a mosque from which a muezzin leads the Call to Prayer.
- **parapet**: Part of a perimeter that extends above the roof.

History

Djenné is a town and an urban commune in the inland Niger Delta region of central Mali. Between the 11th and 13th centuries, Djenné was a leading commercial center in West Africa. As a major terminal in the gold, salt, and slave trade of the trans-Saharan trade route, it flourished for several centuries. Much of the trans-Saharan trade in and out of Timbuktu passed through Djenné.

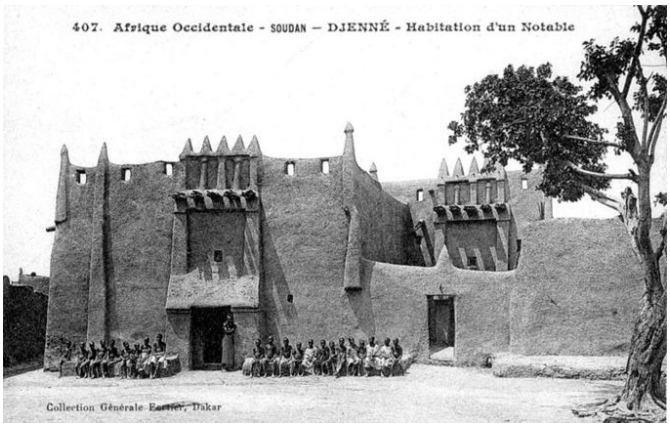
Djenné was also a chief center of Sudanese Islam in this period. Its Great Mosque was an important pillar of religious life. However, the rise of the Mali Empire in the 13th century contributed to the civilization's steady decline, and its brief period of dominance ended when it was reduced to a tributary state. Between the 14th and 17th centuries, Djenné and Timbuktu were both important trading posts in a long-distance trade network. Both towns became centers of Islamic scholarship, and in the 17th century Djenné was a thriving center of learning.

The town is famous for its distinctive Sudanese-style mud-brick architecture, most notably the Great Mosque. To the south of the town is Djenné-Jéno, the site of one of the oldest-known towns in sub-Saharan Africa. Djenné, together with Djenné-Jéno and the Great Mosque, was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988.

Architecture

Nearly all of the buildings in the town consist of load-bearing walls made from sun-baked mud bricks coated with mud plaster. Because the walls are load-bearing, doors and windows must be small and few, often resulting in dark interiors. In Djenné, the mud-brick buildings need to be replastered with mud at least every other year. Even then, the annual rains can cause serious damage. Older buildings are often entirely rebuilt.

Traditional houses are two stories with flat roofs built around a small central courtyard. Constructed with imposing façades featuring pilaster-like buttresses , many have elaborate arrangements of pinnacles forming a parapet above the entrance door. The façades are decorated with bundles of rodier palm sticks called *toron*, that project away from the wall and serve as a type of scaffolding. Ceramic pipes extend from the roofline to protect the walls from rain water damage. Many houses built before 1900 are in the *Toucouleur-style* and have a massive covered porch set between two large buttresses. These houses generally have a single small window onto the street set above the entrance door.



A house in Djenné: Many houses in Djenné are built with Toucouleur-style façades.

The Great Mosque

The rise of Islam witnessed a steady construction of mosques in the region. Sudano-Sahelian architecture reproduces the sacred architecture of Mecca in mud-brick and other local materials. Similar styles are evident in mosques in Ghana and Tunisia.

The Great Mosque of Djenné is the largest mud-brick or adobe building in the world, considered by many architects to be the greatest achievement of the Sudano-Sahelian architectural style with definite Islamic influences. As well as being the center of religious and community life, it is one of the most famous landmarks in Africa. The actual date of construction of the original mosque is unknown, but dates as early as 1200 and as late as 1330 have been suggested.

Falling into disrepair over the centuries, the French administration arranged for the original mosque to be rebuilt in 1907. The position of at least some of the outer walls appears follows those of the original mosque, but it is unclear as to whether the columns supporting the roof kept to the previous arrangement. What was almost certainly novel in the rebuilt mosque was the symmetric arrangement of three large towers in the *qibla* wall. There has been debate as to what extent the design of the rebuilt mosque was subject to French influence.

Great Mosque of Djenné: Originally built in the 13th or 14th century, the Great Mosque seen today was completed in 1907.

The *qibla*, which faces the direction of Mecca, is dominated by three large, box-like minarets jutting out from the main wall, each topped with an ostrich egg. The central minaret is approximately 48 feet tall. The eastern wall is roughly three feet thick and strengthened on the exterior by 18 buttresses. The corners are formed by rectangular buttresses topped by pinnacles.

The prayer hall, measuring about 85 by 164 feet, occupies the eastern half of the mosque behind the *qibla* wall. The mud-covered, rodier-palm roof is supported by nine interior walls running north-south and pierced by pointed arches that reach almost to the roof. In the prayer hall, each of the three towers in the *qibla* wall has a niche or *mihrab* . The imam conducts the prayers from the *mihrab* in the larger central tower. A narrow opening in the ceiling of the central *mihrab* connects with a small room situated above roof level in the tower. To the right of the *mihrab* in the central tower is a second niche, the pulpit or *minbar*, from which the imam preaches his Friday sermon.

Architecture of Aksun and Lalibela

Aksum and Lalibela were cities in northern Ethiopia that accomplished great feats of architecture.

Learning Objectives

Identify the famous rock-cut churches of Lalibela and the stelae, obelisk, and Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion of Aksum.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Aksum was the original capital of the Kingdom of Aksum, a naval and trading power that ruled the region from about 400 BCE to the 10th century.
- The stelae were large stone towers that served as grave markers and reached up to 33 meters high.
- In 1937, the 24-meter tall, 1,700-year-old Obelisk of Aksum was discovered. Today it is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of engineering from the height of the Aksumite empire.
- The Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion, believed to house the Ark of the Covenant, bears a design similar to that of Eastern Orthodox churches in Europe. Its most recent building, constructed in the 1950s, has a dome similar to the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.
- Lalibela is a holy town most famous for its churches carved from the living rock, which play an important part in the history of rock-cut architecture . Its buildings, built in the 11th and 12th centuries, are considered symbolic representations of Jerusalem.

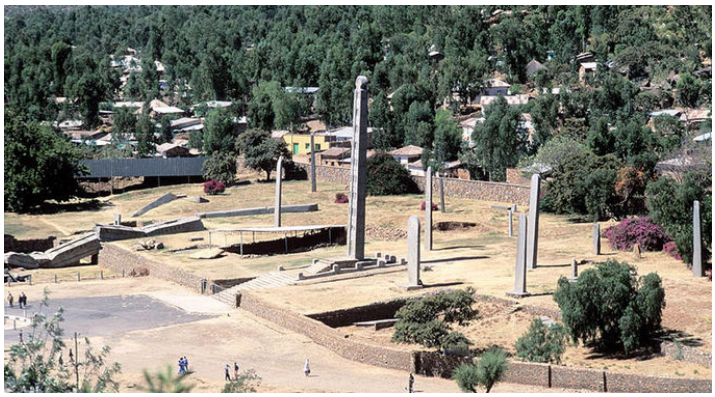
Key Terms

- **Obelisk**: A tall, square, tapered stone monolith topped with a pyramidal point, frequently used as a monument.
- **rock-cut architecture**: The creation of structures by excavating solid rock where it naturally occurs.

Aksum

Aksum (sometimes spelled Axum) is a city in northern Ethiopia that was the original capital of the Kingdom of Aksum. A naval and trading power, the kingdom ruled the region from about 400 BCE to the 10th century, reaching its height under King Ezana (baptized as Abreha) in the fourth century.

The stelae are the most identifiable part of the Aksumite legacy. These stone towers marked graves and were often engraved with a pattern or emblem denoting the person’s rank. The largest number are in the Northern Stelae Park, ranging to the grand size of the Great Stele (33 meters high, 2.35 meters deep, and 520 tons), which is believed to have fallen and broken during construction. The stelae have most of their mass above- ground but are stabilized by massive underground counterweights.



The Northern Stelae Park at the town of Axum, Ethiopia: The stelae in Northern Stelae Park range to 33 meters high.

The Obelisk of Aksum after its return to Ethiopia in 2005: The obelisk is an example of the stelae built by the Aksum kingdom.

Aksum is best known for the 1937 discovery of the 24-meter tall, 1,700-year-old Obelisk of Axum. Broken into five parts, it was found on the ground and shipped by Italian soldiers to Rome to be erected. The obelisk is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of engineering from the height of the Aksumite empire, and in 2005 it was finally returned to Aksum.

The Church of St. Mary of Zion, an Orthodox church built in 1665 and said to contain the Ark of the Covenant, is actually a reconstruction. The original church is believed to have been built during the reign of Ezana, the first Christian ruler of the Kingdom of Axum during the fourth century. It has been rebuilt several times since then. St. Mary of Zion was the traditional place where Ethiopian Emperors came to be crowned. In fact if an Emperor was not crowned at Axum or did not at least have his coronation ratified by a special service at St. Mary of Zion, he could not hold the official title.

Old Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion: This location remains open only to men.

Like many Eastern European churches, the Church of St. Mary of Zion is a centrally-planned structure with a dome serving as its focal point. In the 1950s the Emperor Haile Selassie built a new modern cathedral , open to both men and women, next to the old cathedral. Its dome bears a striking resemblance to the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey. The old church remains accessible only to men, as Mary, symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant allegedly resting in its chapel, is the only woman allowed within its compound.

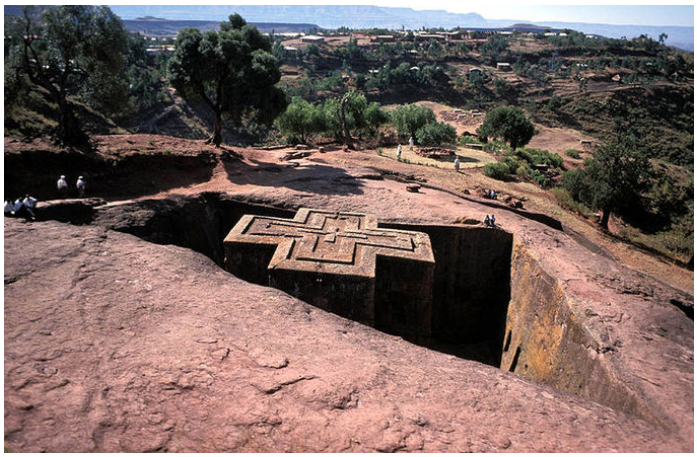
New Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion: The dome and bell tower of the new Cathedral of Our Lady Mary of Zion, built by Emperor Haile Selassie in the 1950s.

Other points of interest include archaeological and ethnographic museums, the Ezana Stone monument documenting the conversion of King Ezana to Christianity, King Bazen's megalith Tomb, Queen of Sheba's Bath, the Ta'akha Maryam and Dungur palaces, the monasteries of Abba Pentalewon and Abba Liqanos, and the Lioness of Gobedra rock art.

Lalibela

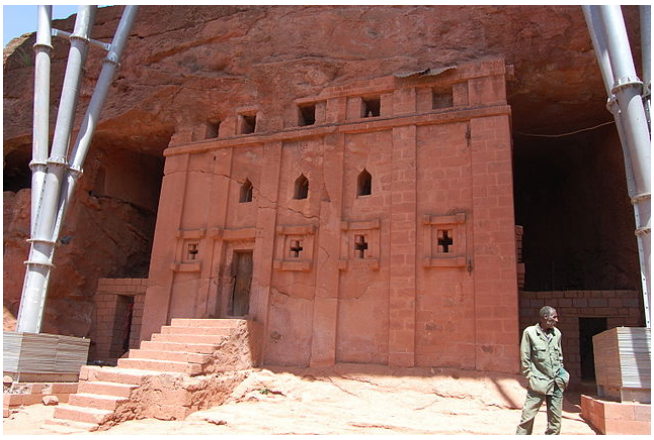
Lalibela is a town in northern Ethiopia famous for its monolithic rock-cut churches. One of Ethiopia's holiest cities second only to Aksum, Lalibela is a center of pilgrimage for much of the country. During the reign of Saint Gebre Mesqel Lalibela in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, the current town was known as Roha. St. Lalibela is said to have seen Jerusalem, then attempt to build a new Jerusalem as his capital in response to the capture of old Jerusalem by Muslims in 1187. As such, many features of the city have Biblical names—even the town's river is known as the River Jordan. It remained the capital of Ethiopia from the late 12th century into the 13th century. The rural town is known around the world for its churches carved from living rock, which play an important part in the history of rock-cut architecture. There are thirteen churches, assembled in four groups:

1. The Northern Group includes Biete Medhane Alem (home to the Lalibela Cross and believed to be the largest monolithic church in the world), Biete Maryam, Biete Golgotha (known for its arts and said to contain the tomb of King Lalibela), the Selassie Chapel, and the Tomb of Adam.
2. The Western Group includes Biete Giyorgis, a cruciform structure, said to be the most finely executed and best-preserved church.
3. The Eastern Group includes Biete Amanuel (possibly the former royal chapel), Biete Merkorios (possibly a former prison), Biete Abba Libanos, and Biete Gabriel-Rufael (possibly a former royal palace), linked to a holy bakery.
4. The last group lies further afield. Located here are the monastery of Ashetan Maryam and the Yimrehane Kristos church (built in the eleventh century in the Aksumite fashion but within a cave).



Biete Giyorgis, the Church of St. George, in Lalibela, Ethiopia (top view): Biete Giyorgis is one of the finest examples of rock-cut architecture in Ethiopia.

Biete Giyorgis, ground view



Entrance of Biete Amanuel

Architecture of Great Zimbabwe

Perhaps the most famous site in southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe is a ruined city constructed by the Mwenemutapa.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish the features of the Hill Complex, the Greate Enclosure, and the Valley Complex of Great Zimbabwe.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Small cattle-herding communities began to appear in the vicinity of what would become Great Zimbabwe from the fourth through seventh century CE. As the people began to exploit the nearby gold mines, their leaders became very rich and were able to form a centralized state.
- Capable of sustaining up to 18,000 people, Great Zimbabwe was built between 1100 and 1400 as a massive capital city and home to the king.
- Elaborate artifacts , including the famous soapstone Zimbabwe Birds, suggest that Great Zimbabwe was the hub of an extensive global trade network.
- By 1500, Great Zimbabwe was abandoned, either because of changes in the environment or changes in trade networks.
- Though European colonists long attempted to deny that Great Zimbabwe had been built by native Africans, it has become a major cultural landmark and source of pride in Africa.

Key Terms

- **pastoralist**: A person whose primary occupation is the raising of livestock.

Perhaps the most famous site in southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe is a ruined civilization constructed by the Mwenemutapa. A monumental city built of stone, it is one of the oldest and largest structures in southern Africa. Located about 150 miles from the modern Zimbabwean capital of Harare, Great Zimbabwe was the capital of a medieval kingdom that occupied the region on the eastern edge of Kalahari Desert.

Development of Great Zimbabwe

As there are no written records from the people who inhabited Great Zimbabwe, knowledge of the culture is dependent on archaeology. Small farming and iron-mining communities began to appear in the area between the fourth and seventh centuries CE. Most were cattle pastoralists , but the discovery of gold and new mining techniques contributed to a rise in trade with caravan merchants to the north. As local leaders became rich from trade, they grew in power and created the centralized city-state of Great Zimbabwe.

Monument Construction

Construction of the monument began in the 11th century and continued through the fourteenth century, spanning an area of 1,780 acres and covering a radius of 100 to 200 miles. At its peak, it could have housed up to 18,000 people. The load-bearing walls of its structures were built using granite with no mortar, evidence of highly skilled masonry. The ruins form three distinct architectural groups known as the Hill Complex (occupied from the ninth through 13th centuries), the Great Enclosure (occupied from the 13th through 15th centuries), and the Valley Complex (occupied from the 14th through 16th centuries).

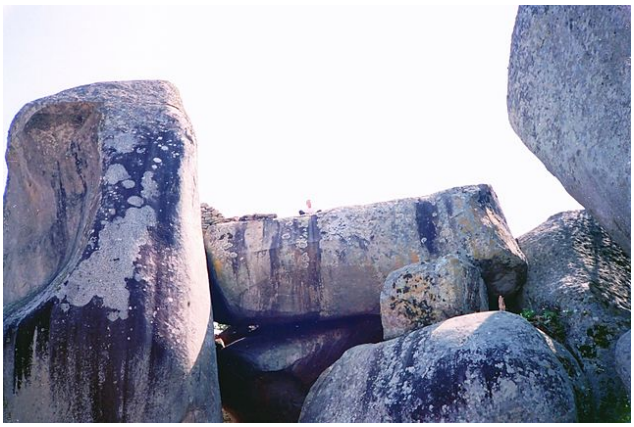
One of the most prominent features of Great Zimbabwe was its walls, some of which reached 11 meters high and extended approximately 820 feet.

Close-up of Great Zimbabwe: Great Zimbabwe is most famous for its enormous walls, built without mortar.

There are stone structures linked by passageways and some parts of the site incorporate natural rock formations into the design, evident in at least one structure in the Hill Complex.

Hill Complex: Ruins of a building from the Hill Complex, where the naturally occurring rock formations were built into part of the foundation.

Notable features of the Hill Complex include the Eastern Enclosure, a high balcony enclosure overlooking the Eastern Enclosure, and a huge boulder in a shape similar to that of the Zimbabwe Bird. The Great Enclosure is composed of an inner wall encircling a series of structures, and a younger outer wall. The most important artifacts recovered from the monument are the eight Zimbabwe Birds. These were carved from soapstone on the tops of monoliths the height of a person. Slots in a platform in the Eastern Enclosure of the Hill Complex appear designed to hold the monoliths with the Zimbabwe birds, but archaeologists cannot be sure that this is where the birds rested.



Eastern Enclosure: View west from the Eastern Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe, showing the granite boulder (far right) that resembles the Zimbabwe Birds. A copy of one of the famous sculptures is shown below for comparison.

Zimbabwe Bird: Copy of Zimbabwe Bird soapstone sculpture.

The Conical Tower was constructed between the two walls. The Valley Complex is divided into the Upper and Lower Valley Ruins, with different periods of occupation.

The Conical Tower: The Conical Tower is 18 feet (5.5 meters) in diameter and 30 feet (9.1 meters) high.

Valley Complex ruins: Ruins of the foundations demonstrate the same level of skill seen in the more intact walls elsewhere in Great Zimbabwe.

One theory suggests that the complexes were the work of successive kings. Perhaps the focus of power moved from the Hill Complex to the Great Enclosure in the 12th century, then to the Upper Valley, and finally to the Lower Valley in the early 16h century. A more structuralist interpretation holds that the different complexes had different functions. For example the Hill Complex was a temple, the Valley Complex was built for the citizens, and the Great Enclosure was used by the king.

Cultural Aspects of Great Zimbabwe

Great Zimbabwe shows a high degree of social stratification, characteristic for centralized states. For the elite, there seems to have been a great deal of wealth. Plentiful pottery, iron tools, copper and gold jewelry, elaborately worked ivory , bronze spearheads, gold beads and pendants, and soapstone sculptures have all been found at the site. Some of the artifacts, such as ceramics and glass vessels , appear to have come from Arabia, India, and even China, suggesting that Great Zimbabwe was a major trade center. Smaller stone settlements called *zimbabwes* can be found nearby. These are thought to be seats of authority for local governors acting under the king of Great Zimbabwe. These smaller settlements would have been supported by surrounding farmers.

Great Zimbabwe was abandoned by 1500, possibly due to land exhaustion, drought, famine , or a decline in trade. Zimbabwean culture would continue in Mutapa, centered on the city of Sofala. The site of Great Zimbabwe is considered a source of pride in the region, and the modern nation of Zimbabwe derived its name from the site. Nonetheless, when European colonizers first found the

ruins in the late 19th century, most did not believe that the site could have been built by indigenous Africans. In fact, political pressure was put on historians and architects to deny its construction by black people until Zimbabwe's independence in the 1960s.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Djenne Fortier 407. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Djenne_Fortier_407.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Great Mosque of Djennu00e9 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Mosque_of_Djenn%C3%A9_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Djennu00e9-Djenno. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Djenne-Djenno. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qibla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qibla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Parapet. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/parapet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fau00e7ade. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/facade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African Architecture. **Provided by**: Afropedea. **Located at**: http://www.afropedea.org/african-architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Mosque of Djennu00e9. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Mosque_of_Djenn%C3%A9. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Djennu00e9. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Djenne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pilaster. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pilaster. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Bet_Abba_Libanos_(5499043130).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22956378. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Church_Our_Lady_Mary_Zion_Axum_Ethio.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1408578. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bete Giyorgis Lalibela Ethiopia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bete_Giyorgis_Lalibela_Ethiopia.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Axum northern stelea park. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Axum_northern_stelea_park.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-382-21.1.-Aksum-Maria_Zion.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24624987. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 372px-Bete_Giyorgis_03.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28203064. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rome Stele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rome_Stele.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Our_Lady_Mary_of_Zion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Obelisk of Axum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Obelisk_of_Axum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rock-Cut Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock-cut_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kingdom of Aksum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Aksum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lalibela. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lalibela. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Axum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Axum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Obelisk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Obelisk. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Zimbabwe (Donjon). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Zimbabwe_(Donjon).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 262px-Zim-bird.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3475104. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- 640px-Alloes-valley-great-zimbabwe.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8966650%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 640px-Eastern-enclosure-great-zimbabwe.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8966638%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Great_Zimbabwe_Ruins2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3594362. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Zimbabwe Closeup. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Zimbabwe_Closeup.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Zimbabwe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_zimbabwe. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Great Zimbabwe. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/HIST101-7.2.1-GuptaDynasty-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/Mwenemutapa. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org's_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/Mwenemutapa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pastoralist. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pastoralist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 15.3: Architecture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

16: Early Medieval Europe

16.1: The Early Middle Ages

16.2: The Vikings

16.3: The Carolingians

16.4: The Ottonians

This page titled 16: Early Medieval Europe is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

16.1: The Early Middle Ages

The Early Middle Ages

The Early Middle Ages began with the fall of the Roman Empire and ended in the early 11th century; its art encompasses vast and divergent forms of media.

Learning Objectives

Identify the major periods and styles into which European art of the Early Middle Ages is classified, and artistic elements common to all of them

Key Takeaways

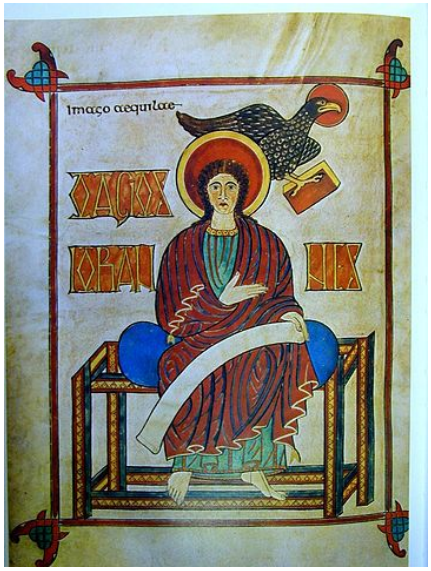
Key Points

- “Medieval art” applies to various media , including sculpture, illuminated manuscripts , tapestries , stained glass, metalwork , and mosaics .
- Early medieval art in Europe is an amalgamation of the artistic heritage of the Roman Empire, the early Christian church, and the “barbarian” artistic culture of Northern Europe.
- Despite the wide range of media, the use of valuable and precious materials is a constant in medieval art. Many artworks feature the lavish use of gold, jewels, expensive pigments , and other precious goods.
- A rise in illiteracy during the Early Middle Ages resulted in the need for art to convey complex narratives and symbolism . As a result, art became more stylized , losing the classical naturalism of Graeco-Roman times, for much of the Middle Ages.
- Few large stone buildings were constructed between the Constantinian basilicas of the fourth and eighth centuries. By the late eighth century, the Carolingian Empire revived the basilica form of architecture.

The Middle Ages of the European world covers approximately 1,000 years of art history in Europe, and at times extended into the Middle East and North Africa. The Early Middle Ages is generally dated from the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 CE) to approximately 1000, which marks the beginning of the Romanesque period. It includes major art movements and periods, national and regional art, genres , and revivals. Art historians attempt to classify medieval art into major periods and styles with some difficulty, as medieval regions frequently featured distinct artistic styles such as Anglo-Saxon or Norse . However, a generally accepted scheme includes Early Christian art, Migration Period art, Byzantine art, Insular art , Carolingian art, Ottonian art, Romanesque art , and Gothic art, as well as many other periods within these central aesthetic styles.

Population decline, relocations to the countryside, invasion, and migration began in Late Antiquity and continued in the Early Middle Ages. The large-scale movements of the Migration Period, including various Germanic peoples, formed new kingdoms in what remained of the Western Roman Empire. In the West, most kingdoms incorporated the few extant Roman institutions. Monasteries were founded as campaigns to Christianize pagan Europe continued. The Franks, under the Carolingian dynasty , briefly established the Carolingian Empire during the later eighth and early ninth century. It covered much of Western Europe but later succumbed to the pressures of internal civil wars combined with external invasions—Vikings from the north, Hungarians from the east, and Saracens from the south.

As literacy declined and printed material became available only to monks and nuns who copied illuminated manuscripts, art became the primary method of communicating narratives (usually of a Biblical nature) to the masses . Conveying complex stories took precedence over producing naturalistic imagery , leading to a shift toward stylized and abstracted figures for most of the Early Middle Ages. Abstraction and stylization also appeared in imagery accessible only to select communities, such as monks in remote monasteries like the complex at Lindisfarne off the coast of Northumberland, England.



John the Evangelist page from the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (c. 635 CE): As is common in early medieval art, the figures in this page appear flat and stylized. The bench on which John sits does not recede realistically into the space behind him. Modeling is kept to a minimum, and the clothing that John wears does not acknowledge the body beneath.

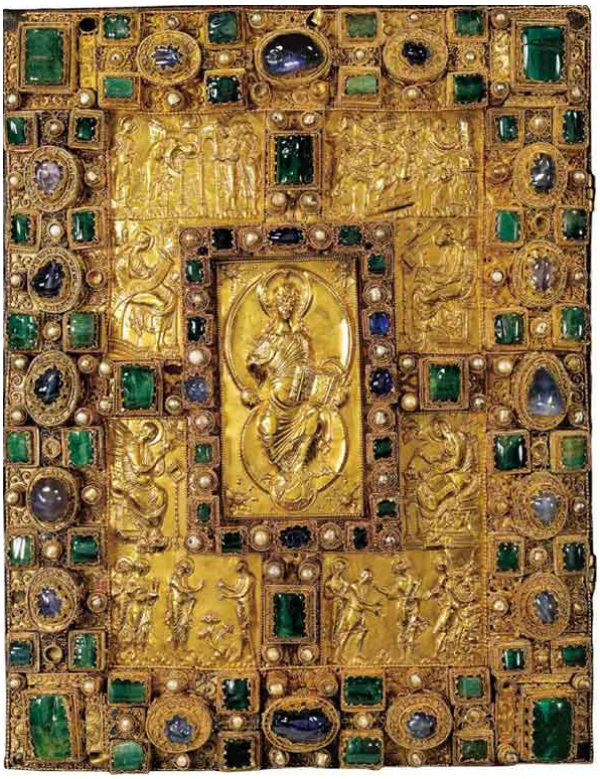
Early medieval art exists in many media. The works that remain in large numbers include sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, stained glass, metalwork, and mosaics, all of which have had a higher survival rate than fresco wall-paintings and works in precious metals or textiles such as tapestries. In the early medieval period, the decorative arts, including metalwork, ivory carving, and embroidery using precious metals, were probably more highly valued than paintings or sculptures. Metal and inlaid objects, such as armor and royal regalia (crowns, scepters, and the like) rank among the best-known early medieval works that survive to this day.

Visigoth votive crown (before 672 CE).: Detail of a votive crown from Visigothic Spain. Gold and precious stones. Part of the Treasure of Guarrazar.

Early medieval art in Europe grew out of the artistic heritage of the Roman Empire and the iconographic traditions of the early Christian church. These sources were mixed with the vigorous “Barbarian” artistic culture of Northern Europe to produce a remarkable artistic legacy. The history of medieval art can be seen as an ongoing interplay between the elements of classical, early Christian, and “barbarian” art. Apart from the formal aspects of classicism, there was a continuous tradition of realistic depiction that survived in Byzantine art of Eastern Europe throughout the period. In the West realistic presentation appears intermittently, combining and sometimes competing with new expressionist possibilities. These expressionistic styles developed both in Western Europe and in the Northern aesthetic of energetic decorative elements.

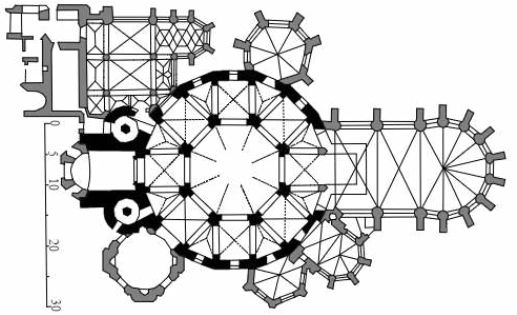
Monks and monasteries had a deep effect on the religious and political life of the Early Middle Ages, in various cases acting as land trusts for powerful families, centers of propaganda and royal support in newly conquered regions, and bases for missions and proselytizing. They were the main and sometimes only regional outposts of education and literacy. Many of the surviving manuscripts of the Latin classics were copied in monasteries in the Early Middle Ages. Monks were also the authors of new works, including history, theology, and other subjects written by authors such as Bede (died 735), a native of northern England who wrote in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

The use of valuable materials is a constant in medieval art. Most illuminated manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages had lavish book covers decked with precious metal, ivory, and jewels. One of the best examples of precious metalwork in medieval art is the jeweled cover of the *CodexAureus of St. Emmeram* (c. 870). The *Codex*, whose origin is unknown, is decorated with gems and gold relief . Gold was also used to create sacred objects for churches and palaces, as a solid background for mosaics, and applied as gold leaf to miniatures in manuscripts and panel paintings. Named after Emmeram of Regensburg and lavishly illuminated, the *Codex* is an important example of Carolingian art, as well of one of very few surviving treasure bindings of the late ninth century.



Cover of the *Codex Aureus*: Gold and gem-encrusted cover of the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram*, 870. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000.

Few large stone buildings were constructed between the Constantinian basilicas of the fourth and eighth centuries, although many smaller ones were built during the sixth and seventh centuries. By the early eighth century, the Merovingian dynasty revived the basilica form of architecture. One feature of the basilica is the use of a transept , the “arms” of a cross-shaped building that are perpendicular to the long nave . Other new features of religious architecture include the crossing tower and a monumental entrance to the church, usually at the west end of the building.



Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen (consecrated 805 CE).: The Palatine Chapel is an example of Charlemegne's attempt to revive the values of the Roman Empire under the banner of Christianity. While the plan predates the cruciform basilica, it revives the classical round arch and heavy stone masonry as well as the east-facing apse of Late Antiquity.

Architecture under the Merovingians

Merovingian architecture emerged under the Merovingian Frankish dynasty and reflected a fusion of Western and Eurasian influences.

Learning Objectives

Describe some basic elements of Merovingian architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Merovingian architecture often continued the Roman basilica tradition, but also adopted influences from as far away as Syria and Armenia.
- Many Merovingian churches no longer exist. One surviving church is Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains at Metz, originally built as a Roman gymnasium in the late fourth century and reappropriated into a church in the mid-eighth century.
- Some small Merovingian structures remain, especially baptisteries, which were spared rebuilding in later centuries.
- The Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus, highlights the influence of Syrian technique on Merovingian architecture, evidenced by its octagonal shape and a covered cupola on pillars . On the other hand, St. Jean at Poitiers is very different from the Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus, as it has the form of a rectangle flanked by three apses .
- Although mostly reconstructed, the interior of the baptistery of Saint-Sauveur reveals the influence of Roman architecture on Merovingian architects.

Key Terms

- **the Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus**: A structure that highlights the influence of Syrian technique on Merovingian architecture.
- **the basilica of Saint Martin at Tours**: One of the most famous examples of Merovingian church architecture, built at the beginning of the dynasty's reign.
- **Merovingian dynasty**: A Frankish family who ruled parts of present-day France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and parts of Germany from the mid-fifth century to the mid-eighth century.

Merovingian architecture developed under the Merovingian dynasty , a Frankish family who ruled parts of present-day France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and parts of Germany from the mid-fifth century to the mid-eighth century. The advent of the Merovingian dynasty in Gaul led to important changes in architecture.

The unification of the Frankish kingdom under Clovis I (465–511) and his successors corresponded with the need for new churches. Merovingian architecture often continued the Roman basilica tradition, but also adopted influences from as far away as Syria and Armenia. In the East, most structures were in timber , but stone was more common for significant buildings in the West and in the southern areas that later fell under Merovingian rule.

Many Merovingian churches no longer exist. One famous example is the basilica of Saint Martin at Tours, at the beginning of Merovingian rule and at the time on the edge of Frankish territory. According to scholars, the church had 120 marble columns , towers at the east end, and several mosaics . A feature of the basilica of Saint-Martin that became a hallmark of Frankish church architecture was the sarcophagus or reliquary of the saint, raised to be visible and sited axially behind the altar, sometimes in the apse. There are no Roman precedents for this Frankish innovation. A number of other buildings now lost, including the Merovingian foundations of Saint-Denis, St. Gereonin Cologne, and the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, are described as similarly ornate.

One surviving church is Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains at Metz. The building was originally built in 380 CE as a gymnasium (a European type of school) for a Roman spa complex. In the seventh century, the structure was converted into a church, becoming the chapel of a Benedictine convent. The structure bears common hallmarks of a Roman basilica, including the round arches and tripartite division into nave (center) and aisles (left and right of the nave), a division visible from the exterior of the building. Apparently missing, however, is the apse.

Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains: This church in Metz, France bears common hallmarks of a Roman basilica, including the round arches and tripartite division into nave (center) and aisles (left and right of the nave), a division visible from the exterior of the building.

Other major churches have been rebuilt, usually more than once. However, some small Merovingian structures remain, especially baptisteries, which were spared rebuilding in later centuries. For instance, the Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus, highlights the influence of Syrian technique on Merovingian architecture, evidenced by its octagonal shape and covered cupola on pillars.

Baptistery at Saint-Léonce of Fréjus: The Baptistery at the cathedral at Saint-Léonce of Fréjus reflects the Syrian and Armenian influences on early Merovingian architecture (demonstrated by the cupola on pillars).

By contrast , St. Jean at Poitiers has the form of a rectangle flanked by three apses. The original building has probably had a number of alterations but preserves traces of Merovingian influence in its marble capitals .

Baptistry of Saint-Jean of Poitiers: The Baptistry of St. Jean at Poitiers (sixth century) has the form of a rectangle flanked by three apses. The original building has probably undergone a number of alterations but preserves in its decoration (marble capitals) a strong Merovingian character.

The baptistery of Saint-Sauveur at Aix-en-Provence was built at the beginning of the sixth century, at about the same time as similar baptisteries in Fréjus Cathedral and Riez Cathedral in Provence, in Albenga, Liguria, and in Djémila, Algeria. Only the octagonal baptismal pool and the lower part of the walls remain from that period. The other walls, Corinthian columns, arcade , and dome were rebuilt in the Renaissance . A viewing hole in the floor reveals the bases of the porticoes of the Roman forum under the baptistery.

Baptistery of Saint-Sauveur : Although mostly reconstructed, the interior of the baptistery reveals the influence of Roman architecture on Merovingian architects.

By the seventh century, Merovingian craftsmen were brought to England for their glass-making skills, and Merovingian stonemasons were used to build English churches, suggesting that the culture's ornamental arts were highly regarded by neighboring peoples.

Anglo-Saxon and Irish Art

Celtic and Anglo-Saxon art display similar aesthetic qualities and media, including architecture and metalwork.

Learning Objectives

Compare elements of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Anglo-Saxon art emerged when the Anglo-Saxons migrated from the continent in the fifth century and ended in 1066 with the Norman Conquest. Anglo-Saxon art, which favored brightness and color, survives mostly in architecture and metalwork .
- The Sutton Hoo burial site contains the best known examples of Anglo-Saxon metalwork, showing the masterful craftsmanship of items such as armor and ornamental objects.
- The architectural character of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical buildings range from influence from Celtic and Early Christian styles . Later Anglo-Saxon architecture is characterized by pilasters , blank arcading, baluster shafts and triangular-headed openings.
- Celtic art is ornamental, avoiding straight lines , only occasionally using symmetry , and often involving complex symbolism . Celtic art has used a variety of styles and as shown influences from other cultures in knotwork, spirals, key patterns, lettering, and human figures.
- With the arrival of Christianity, Celtic art was influenced by both Mediterranean and Germanic traditions, creating the Insular style. The interlace patterns that are typical of Celtic art were in fact introduced to Insular art from the Mediterranean and Migration artistic traditions.

Key Terms

- **Insular Art**: Art produced in the post-Roman history of the British Isles, also known as Hiberno-Saxon art. The term derives from the Latin term for island. Britain and Ireland shared a common style that differed from that of the rest of Europe in this period.

Anglo-Saxon art emerged when the Anglo-Saxons migrated from the continent in the fifth century and ended in 1066 with the Norman Conquest. Anglo-Saxon art, which favored brightness and color, survives mostly in architecture and metalwork.

Anglo-Saxon Metalwork

Anglo-Saxon metalwork consisted of Germanic-style jewelry and armor, which was commonly placed in burials. After the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity in the seventh century, the fusion of Germanic Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and Early Christian techniques created the Hiberno-Saxon style (or Insular art) in the form of sculpted crosses and liturgical metalwork. Insular art is characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decoration.

Anglo-Saxon metalwork initially used the Germanic Animal Style decoration that would be expected from recent immigrants, but gradually developed a distinctive Anglo-Saxon character. For instance, round disk brooches were preferred for the grandest Anglo-Saxon pieces, over continental styles of fibulae and Romano-British penannular brooches. Decoration included cloisonné ("cellwork") in gold and garnet for high-status pieces. Despite a considerable number of other finds, the discovery of the ship burial at Sutton Hoo transformed the history of Anglo-Saxon art, showing a level of sophistication and quality that was wholly unexpected at this date. Among the most famous finds from Sutton Hoo are a helmet and an ornamental purse lid.

Sutton Hoo helmet (reconstruction): The Sutton Hoo helmet features an iron skull of a single vaulted shell and has a full face mask, a solid neck guard, and deep cheekpieces. These features suggest an English origin for the basic structure of the helmet. Although outwardly similar to the Swedish examples, the Sutton Hoo helmet is a product of better craftsmanship. This reconstruction in the Royal Armouries shows the intricate jeweled inlay, repoussé reliefs, and abstract designs that once adorned the original.

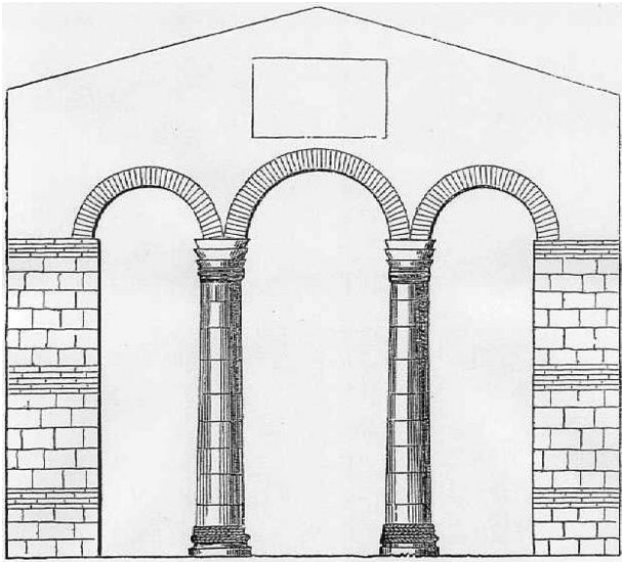
Sutton Hoo Purse Lid: This ornamental purse lid covered a lost leather pouch, hung from a waist belt. The forms on the top row feature interlace typical of Insular art, while the bottom row features stylized humans and mythical animals either devouring or being devoured.

Anglo-Saxon Architecture

Anglo-Saxon secular buildings in Britain were generally simple, constructed mainly using timber with thatch for roofing. No universally accepted example survives aboveground. There are, however, many remains of Anglo-Saxon church architecture. At least fifty churches of Anglo-Saxon origin display the culture's major architectural features, although in some cases these aspects are small and significantly altered. The round-tower church and tower-nave church are distinctive Anglo-Saxon types. All surviving churches, except one timber church, are built of stone or brick, and in some cases show evidence of reused Roman work.

Fobbing Parish Church, section of outer wall.: Blocked Anglo-Saxon round-arched window at Fobbing Parish Church. Also visible is the textured stone work of the outer wall.

The architectural character of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical buildings range from influence from Celtic and Early Christian styles. Later Anglo-Saxon architecture is characterized by pilasters, blank arcading, baluster shafts and triangular-headed openings. In the final decades of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom a more general Romanesque style was introduced from the Continent, as in the additions to Westminster Abbey made from 1050 onwards.



Anglo-Saxon church at Reculver: Triple arch opening separating the nave and apse in the seventh-century church at Reculver, Kent (now destroyed). This reconstruction shows the blank arcading that was common in Anglo-Saxon architecture.

Celtic Art

"Celtic art" refers to the art of people who spoke Celtic languages in Europe and those with uncertain language but cultural and stylistic similarities with Celtic speakers. Typically, Celtic art is ornamental, avoiding straight lines, only occasionally using symmetry, and often involving complex symbolism. Celtic art has used a variety of styles and has shown influences from other cultures in knotwork, spirals, key patterns, lettering, and human figures.

Around 500 BCE, the La Tène style appeared rather suddenly, coinciding with some kind of societal upheaval that involved a shift of the major centers to the northwest. La Tène was especially prominent in northern France and western Germany, but over the next

three centuries the style spread as far as Ireland, Italy, and modern Hungary. Early La Tène style adapted ornamental motifs from foreign cultures, including Scythian, Greek, and Etruscan arts. La Tène is a highly stylized curvilinear art based mainly on classical vegetable and foliage motifs such as leafy palmette forms, vines, tendrils, and lotus flowers together with spirals, S-scrolls, lyre , and trumpet shapes. It remains uncertain whether some of the most notable objects found from the La Tène period were made in Ireland or elsewhere (as far away as Egypt in some cases). But in Scotland and the western parts of Britain, versions of the La Tène style remained in use until it became an important component of the Insular style that developed to meet the needs of newly Christian populations.

Celtic art in the medieval period was produced by the people of Ireland and parts of Britain over the course of 700 years. With the arrival of Christianity, Celtic art was influenced by both Mediterranean and Germanic traditions, primarily through Irish contact with Anglo-Saxons, which resulted in the Insular style. The interlace patterns that are regarded as typical of Celtic art were in fact introduced from the Mediterranean and Migration Period artistic traditions. Specific examples of Celtic Insular art include the Tara Brooch and the Ardagh Chalice.

Tara Brooch, front view: Created in about 700 CE, the seven-inch long pseudo-penannular brooch is composed primarily of silver gilt and embellished with intricate abstract decoration including interlace on both the front and back.

The Ardagh Chalice: The Ardagh Chalice reflects the interlace styles introduced into the Celtic Insular Art form from the Mediterranean.

Catholic Celtic sculpture began to flourish in the form of the large stone crosses that held biblical scenes in carved relief . This art form reached its apex in the early 10th century, with Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice and the Ahenny High Cross.

Ahenny High Cross (700-800 CE): Ahenny High Cross, Ireland, one of the primary examples of Celtic sculpture.

Illustrated Books in the Early Middle Ages

Insular art is often characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decorations in illuminated manuscripts.

Learning Objectives

Describe the history and characteristics of illuminated manuscripts in Insular art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- An illuminated manuscript features text supplemented by elaborate decoration. The term is mostly used to refer to any decorated or illustrated manuscript from the Western tradition. Illuminated manuscripts were written on vellum , and some feature the use of precious metals and pigments that were imported to northern Europe.
- Insular art is characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decoration spread boldly across illuminated manuscripts. Insular manuscripts sometimes take a whole page for a single initial or the first few words at beginnings of gospels.
- *TheBook of Kells* is considered a masterwork of Western calligraphy , with its illustrations and ornamentation surpassing that of other Insular Gospel books in complexity. The Kells manuscript's decoration combines traditional Christian iconography with the ornate swirling Insular motifs .
- Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts, such as the *StockholmCodexAureus*, combine Insular art with Italian styles such as classicism.
- Mozarabic art refers to art of Mozarabs, Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus who adopted Arab customs without converting to Islam during the Islamic invasion of the Iberian peninsula. It features a combination of (Hispano) Visigothic, and Islamic art styles, as in the Beatus manuscripts , which combine Insular art illumination forms with Arabic-influenced geometric designs.

Key Terms

- **parchment**: A material made from the polished skin of a calf, sheep, goat or other animal, used as writing paper.
- **Mozarabic**: Art of Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus, the Muslim-conquered territories, after the Arab invasion of the Iberian Peninsula (711 CE) to the end of the 11th century. These people adopted some Arab customs without converting to Islam, preserving their religion and some ecclesiastical and judicial autonomy.
- **Book of Kells**: An illuminated manuscript in Latin containing the four Gospels of the New Testament together with various prefatory texts and tables. It was created by Celtic monks circa 800 or slightly earlier.
- **Insular Art**: Art produced in the post-Roman history of the British Isles, also known as Hiberno-Saxon art. The term derives from the Latin term for island. Britain and Ireland shared a common style that differed from that of the rest of Europe.
- **illuminated manuscript**: A book in which the text is supplemented by decoration, such as initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.

Background

An illuminated manuscript contains text supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations. In the strict definition of the term, an illuminated manuscript indicates only those manuscripts decorated with gold or silver. However, the term is now used to refer to any decorated manuscript from the Western tradition. The earliest surviving substantive illuminated manuscripts are from the period 400 to 600 CE and were initially produced in Italy and the Eastern Roman Empire. The significance of these works lies not only in their inherent art historical value , but also in the maintenance of literacy offered by non-illuminated texts as well. Had it not been for the monastic scribes of Late Antiquity who produced both illuminated and non-illuminated manuscripts, most literature of ancient Greece and Rome would have perished in Europe.

The majority of surviving illuminated manuscripts are from the Middle Ages , and hence most are of a religious nature. Illuminated manuscripts were written on the best quality of parchment , called vellum. By the sixteenth century, the introduction of printing and paper rapidly led to the decline of illumination, although illuminated manuscripts continued to be produced in much smaller numbers for the very wealthy. Early medieval illuminated manuscripts are the best examples of medieval painting, and indeed, for many areas and time periods, they are the only surviving examples of pre-Renaissance painting.

Insular Art in Illustrated Books

Deriving from the Latin word for island (*insula*), Insular art is characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decoration spread boldly across illuminated manuscripts. Insular manuscripts sometimes take a whole page for a single initial or the first few words at beginnings of gospels. The technique of allowing decoration the right to roam was later influential on Romanesque and Gothic art. From the seventh through ninth centuries, Celtic missionaries traveled to Britain and brought the Irish tradition of manuscript illumination, which came into contact with Anglo-Saxon metalworking. New techniques employed were filigree and chip-carving, while new motifs included interlace patterns and animal ornamentation.

The *Book of Kells* (Irish: Leabhar Cheanannais), created by Celtic monks in 800, is an illustrated manuscript considered the pinnacle of Insular art. Also known as the *Book of Columba*, *The Book of Kells* is considered a masterwork of Western calligraphy, with its illustrations and ornamentation surpassing that of other Insular Gospel books in extravagance and complexity. *The Book of Kells*‘s decoration combines traditional Christian iconography with the ornate swirling motifs typical of Insular art. Figures of humans, animals, and mythical beasts, together with Celtic knots and interlacing patterns in vibrant colors, enliven the manuscript’s pages. Many of these minor decorative elements are imbued with Christian symbolism . The manuscript comprises 340 folios made of high-quality vellum and unprecedentedly elaborate ornamentation including 10 full-page illustrations and text pages vibrant with decorated initials and interlinear miniatures. These mark the furthest extension of the anti- classical and energetic qualities of Insular art.

Book of Kells: Folio 27v: Folio 27v contains the symbols of the Four Evangelists (clockwise from top left): a man (Matthew), a lion (Mark), an eagle (John), and an ox (Luke). The Evangelists are placed in a grid and enclosed in an arcade, as is common in the Mediterranean tradition. However, notice the elaborate geometric and stylized ornamentation in the arcade that highlights the Insular aesthetic.

The Insular majuscule script of the text itself in the *Book of Kells* appears to be the work of at least three different scribes. The lettering is in iron gall ink with colors derived from a wide range of substances, many of which were imported from distant lands. The text is accompanied by many full-page miniatures, while smaller painted decorations appear throughout the text in unprecedented quantities. The decoration of the book is famous for combining intricate detail with bold and energetic compositions . The illustrations feature a broad range of colors, most often purple, lilac, red, pink, green, and yellow. As typical with Insular work, there was neither gold nor silver leaf in the manuscript. However, the pigments for the illustrations, which included red and yellow ochre , green copper pigment (sometimes called verdigris), indigo , and lapis lazuli , were very costly and precious. They were imported from the Mediterranean region and, in the case of the lapis lazuli, from northeast Afghanistan.

The decoration of the first eight pages of the canon tables is heavily influenced by early Gospel Books from the Mediterranean, where it was traditional to enclose the tables within an arcade . Although influenced by this Mediterranean tradition, the Kells manuscript presents this motif in an Insular spirit, where the arcades are not seen as architectural elements but rather become stylized geometric patterns with Insular ornamentation. Further, the complicated knot work and interweaving found in the Kells manuscript echo the metalwork and stone carving works that characterized the artistic legacy of the Insular period.

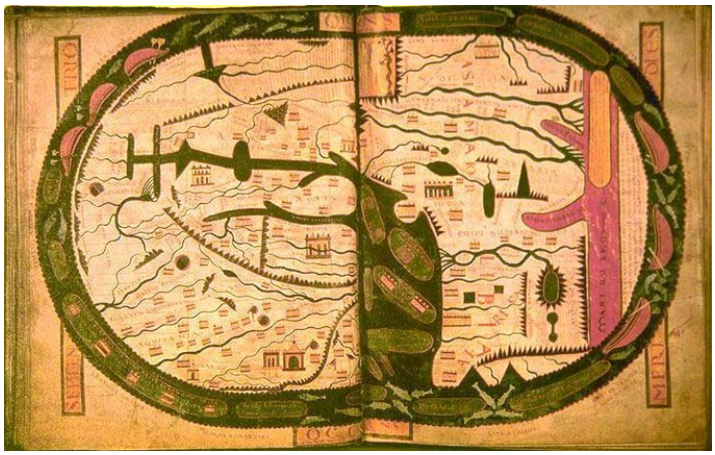
The Book of Kells: This example from the manuscript (folio 292r) shows the lavishly decorated section that opens the Gospel of John.

Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts form a significant part of Insular art and reflect a combination of influences from the Celtic styles that arose when the Anglo-Saxons encountered Irish missionary activity. A different mixture is seen in the opening from the *StockholmCodex Aureus*, where the evangelist portrait reflects an adaptation of classical Italian style, while the text page is mainly in Insular style, especially the first line with its vigorous Celtic spirals and interlace. This is one of the so-called "Tiberius Group" of manuscripts with influence from the Italian style. It is the last English manuscript in which trumpet spiral patterns are found.

The Stockholm Codex Aureus: The evangelist portrait from the Stockholm Codex Aureus, one of the "Tiberius Group," that shows the Insular style and classicizing continental styles that combined and competed in early Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.

The Beatus Manuscripts

The *Commentary on the Apocalypse* was originally a Mozabaric eighth-century work by the Spanish monk and theologian Beatus of Liébana. Often referred to simply as the *Beatus*, it is used today to reference any of the extant manuscript copies of this work, especially any of the 26 illuminated copies that have survived. The historical significance of the *Commentary* is even more pronounced since it included a world map, offering a rare insight into the geographical understanding of the post-Roman world. Considered together, the Beatus codices are among the most important Spanish and Mozarabic medieval manuscripts and have been the subject of extensive scholarly and antiquarian inquiry.



Beatus World Map: The world map from the Saint-Sever Beatus, measuring 37 x 57 cm. This was painted c. 1050 as an illustration to Beatus's work at the Abbey of Saint-Sever in Aquitaine, on the order of Gregori de Montaner, Abbot from 1028 to 1072.

Though Beatus might have written these commentaries as a response to Adoptionism in the Hispania of the late 700s, many scholars believe that the book's popularity in monasteries stemmed from the Arabic-Islamic conquest of the Iberian peninsula, which some Iberian Christians took as a sign of the Antichrist. Not all of the Beatus manuscripts are complete, and some exist only in fragmentary form. However, the surviving manuscripts are lavishly decorated in the Mozarabic, Romanesque, or Gothic style of illumination.

Mozarabic art refers to art of Mozarabs, Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus who adopted Arab customs without converting to Islam during the Islamic invasion of the Iberian peninsula (from the eighth through the 11th centuries). Mozarabic art features a combination of (Hispano) Visigothic and Islamic art styles, as in the Beatus manuscripts, which combine Insular art illumination forms with Arabic-influenced geometric designs.

Beatus of Liébana. *Judgement of Babylon.*: From *Beatus Apocalypse*. Depicts Babylon on fire using Insular art illumination forms, influenced by Arabic geometric designs.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- AachenChapelDB.svg.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palatine_Chapel,_Aachen#/media/File:AachenChapelDB.svg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Codex Aureus Sankt Emmeram. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Codex_Aureus_Sankt_Emmeram.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 360px-Lindisfarne_Gospels_folio_209v.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2647377%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 487px-CoronaRecesvinto01.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2432551%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Wikipedia. **Provided by**: Palatine Chapel, Aachen. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palatine_Chapel,_Aachen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lindisfarne Gospels. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne_Gospels. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Ages. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages#Early_Middle_Ages. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Medieval Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex Aureus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex%20Aureus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frejuscathedrale. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Frejuscathedrale.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 360px-Baptistere_Saint_Sauveur_by_Malost.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/66/Baptistere_Saint_Sauveur_by_Malost.JPG/360px-Baptistere_Saint_Sauveur_by_Malost.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Metz_-_Eglise_Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnais_-_Vue_du_cu00f4tu00e9_Est.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11295607. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 312 Poitiers baptisterio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:312_Poitiers_baptisterio.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Basilica of Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Merovingian Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Merovingian_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Merovingian Art and Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Merovingian_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Merovingian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Merovingian%20Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 451px-Sutton_Hoo_helmet_reconstructed.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/26/Sutton_Hoo_helmet_reconstructed.jpg/451px-Sutton_Hoo_helmet_reconstructed.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 450px-Ireland_2010_etc_029_28229.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/dd/Ireland_2010_etc_029_%282%29.jpg/450px-Ireland_2010_etc_029_%282%29.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Sutton_hoo_28129.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/17/Sutton_hoo_%281%29.JPG/640px-Sutton_hoo_%281%29.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 450px-Ahenny_High_Cross_-_geograph.org.uk_-_475968.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a3/Ahenny_High_Cross_-_geograph.org.uk_-_475968.jpg/450px-Ahenny_High_Cross_-_geograph.org.uk_-_475968.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reculver.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/8/8d/Reculver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Fobbing-detail.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/ac/Fobbing-detail.JPG/640px-Fobbing-detail.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ardagh chalice. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ardagh_chalice.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wikipedia. **Provided by**: Ardagh Hoard. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardagh_Hoard. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sutton Hoo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutton_Hoo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- La Tu00e8ne Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/La_T%C3%A8ne_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anglo-Saxon Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anglo Saxon Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo_Saxon_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Celtic Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic%20Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Insular Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Insular%20Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- KellsFol292rIncipJohn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KellsFol292rIncipJohn.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- beatus-map.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Beatus_map.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- b-facundus-233vd-c3-a9t.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:B_Facundus_233vd%C3%A9t.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ureuscanterburyfolios9v10r.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CodexAureusCanterburyFolios9v10r.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- KellsFol027v4Evang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KellsFol027v4Evang.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Beatus Map. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatus_map. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Parchment. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/parchment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Beatus Manuscripts. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/8329. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Illuminated Manuscripts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuminated_manuscripts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Book of Kells. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Kells. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Medieval Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_art%23Migration_Period_through_Christianization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Illuminated Manuscript. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/illuminated%20manuscript. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Insular Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Insular%20Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 16.1: The Early Middle Ages is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

16.2: The Vikings

Norse Ships in the Early European Middle Ages

The Oseberg ship was discovered in a burial mound in Norway and is one of the finest artistic and archaeological finds from the Viking Age.

Learning Objectives

Identify the important artifacts found in the burial mound of the Oseberg ship

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Vikings used their great ships to invade European coasts, harbors, and river settlements on a seasonal basis. These ships were not only vessels used for war and trade but also the primary means of artistic expression. The Oseberg burial mound contained numerous grave goods and the remains of two female human skeletons. The ship's interment into its burial mound dates from 834 CE, but parts of the ship date from around 800 CE, and scholars believe that ship itself is older.
- The bow and stern of the ship are elaborately decorated with complex woodcarvings in the characteristic "gripping beast" style , also known as the Oseberg style.
- The Oseberg burial contains agricultural and household tools as well as a series of textiles included woolen garments, imported silks, and narrow tapestries . The Oseberg burial is one of the few sources of Viking age textiles, and the wooden cart is the only complete Viking age cart found so far.

Key Terms

- **Oseberg Ship**: A well-preserved Viking vessel discovered in a large burial mound in Norway.

Of Scandinavian descent, Norsemen are often called Vikings after their trading locations on the Norwegian shoreline. Known as pre-Christian traders and pirates, Vikings used their great ships to invade European coasts, harbors, and river settlements on a seasonal basis. They created fast and seaworthy longships that served not only as warring and trading vessels, but also as media for artistic expression and individual design.

The great ships of the Vikings contain some of the major artworks left from this time. For instance, the Oseberg Bow demonstrates the Norse mastery of decorative wood carving and intricate inlay of metal. Likewise, the ship head post—representing a roaring beast—is five inches high with complicated surface ornamentation in the form of interwoven animals that twist and turn.

Osberg Ship Head Post: Animal head post found in the Oseberg ship. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo, Norway. The exact function of the head post is unknown.

Other examples of artistic design on Norse ships include the “King” or “Chieftain” vessels designated for the wealthier classes. Chieftain ships were distinguishable by the design of the bow of their vessel with designs such as bulls, dolphins, gold lions, drakes spewing fire out of their nose, human beings cast in gold and silver, and other unidentifiable animals cast in bronze metal. Typically, the sides of these vessels were decorated using bright colors and wood-carvings.

A Ship Burial

The Oseberg ship (Norwegian: Osebergskipet) is a well-preserved Viking ship discovered in a large burial mound at the Oseberg farm near Tønsberg in Vestfold County, Norway. This ship is widely celebrated as one of the finest artistic and archaeological finds to have survived the Viking Age.

The Oseberg Ship: The Oseberg ship (Viking Ship Museum, Norway)

The Oseberg burial mound contained numerous grave goods and the remains of two female human skeletons. The ship's interment into its burial mound dates from 834 CE, but parts of the ship date from around 800 CE, and scholars believe that ship itself is older. The bow and stern of the ship are elaborately decorated with complex woodcarvings in the characteristic "gripping beast" style, also known as the Oseberg style. This style's primary features are the paws that grip the borders around it, neighboring beasts, or parts of its own body. Although the Osberg style distinguishes early Viking art from previous trends, it is no longer generally accepted as an independent style. Although seaworthy, the ship is relatively frail. It is thought to have been used only for coastal voyages.

Oseberg Ship: This detail from the Oseberg ship demonstrates the elaborate woodcarving designs used as ornamentation on the bow and front of the ship.

The skeletons of two women were found in the Oseberg burial mound. One may have been sacrificed to accompany the other in death. Regardless, the opulence of the burial rite and the grave goods suggests that this was a burial of very high status. For instance, one woman wore a very fine red wool dress of fabric woven in a lozenge twill pattern (a luxury commodity) and a fine white linen veil in a gauze weave. The other wore a plainer blue wool dress with a wool veil, showing some stratification in their social status. Neither woman wore anything entirely made of silk, although small silk strips were appliqued onto a tunic worn under the red dress.

The grave had been disturbed in antiquity and many precious metals that were initially buried with Oseberg ship went missing. Nevertheless, many everyday items and artifacts were found during the early 20th-century excavations of the site. These included four elaborately decorated sleighs, a four-wheel wooden cart, bedposts, wooden chests, and other richly decorated items. For instance, the so-called “Buddha bucket” is a well-known object from the Oseberg site that features a brass and cloisonné enamel ornament of a bucket (pail) handle in the shape of a figure sitting with crossed legs. The bucket itself is made from yew wood held together with brass strips, and the handle is attached to two anthropomorphic figures often compared to depictions of the Buddha in lotus posture (although any connection to Buddhism is uncertain). Archaeologists also found more mundane items, such as agricultural and household tools, and a series of textiles that included woolen garments, imported silks, and narrow tapestries. The Oseberg burial is one of the few sources of Viking-age textiles, and the wooden cart is the only complete Viking-age cart found so far.

"Buddha Bucket": The so-called "Buddha bucket" (Buddha-bøtte), brass and cloisonné enamel ornament of a bucket (pail) handle in the shape of a figure sitting with crossed legs.

Jelling Stones

The Jelling Stones are visual records of the transitional period between Norse paganism and the process of Christianization in Denmark.

Learning Objectives

Examine the function and symbolism of the Runic Stones in Jelling

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Jelling Stones are strongly identified with the creation of Denmark as a nation-state, and both feature one of the earliest records of the name "Danmark."
- The larger stone, known as Harald's stone, is often cited as Denmark's baptismal certificate (*dåbsattest*), containing a depiction of Christ and an inscription celebrating the conversion of the Danes to Christianity.
- The runic inscriptions on the Jelling stones are the best-known in Denmark.
- Originally the stones were brightly painted in polychromatic palettes . The tendency to paint runestones appears throughout Scandinavia.
- The styles in which humans, animals, and abstract interlace designs appear on Harald's Stone bear striking similarity with popular styles in illuminated manuscripts and decorative arts in the British Isles. Contact between the cultures resulted in these parallels.

Key Terms

- **The Jelling Stones**: Massive carved runestones from the 10th century found at the town of Jelling in Denmark.

The Jelling Stones are massive carved runestones from the 10th century, named for the town of Jelling in Denmark. Prior to the 10th century, stone carving was extremely rare or non-existent in most parts of Scandanavia. Subsequently, and likely influenced by the spread of Christianity, the use of carved stone for permanent memorials became prevalent.

The older of the two Jelling Stones is attributed to King Gorm the Old, thought to have been raised in memory of his wife Thyra. King Gorm's son Harald Bluetooth raised the larger of the two stones in memory of his parents, in celebration of his conquest of Denmark and Norway, and to document his conversion of the Danes to Christianity. Art historians consider the runic inscriptions on the Jelling stones the best-known in Denmark.

Jelling Stones: The Jelling Stones are massive carved runestones from the 10th century, named for the town of Jelling in Denmark. Here they are seen protected behind glass.

Scholars have long considered the Jelling Stones visual records of the transitional period between the indigenous Norse paganism and the victory of Christianization in Denmark. The larger stone, known as Harald's stone, is often cited as Denmark's baptismal certificate (*dåbsattest*), containing a depiction of Christ and an inscription celebrating the conversion of the Danes to Christianity. The Jelling Stones are also strongly identified with the creation of Denmark as a nation-state, and both stones offer the earliest examples of the name *Danmark* (in the form of *tanmaurk* on the large ston, and *tanmarkar* on the small stone).

The runestone of Gorm, the older and smaller of the Jelling Stones, has an inscription that reads: "King Gormr made this monument in memory of Thyrvé, his wife, Denmark's adornment." The larger runestone of Harald Bluetooth is engraved on one side with an inscription that reads: "King Harald ordered this monument made in memory of Gormr, his father, and in memory of Thyrvé, his mother. That Harald who won for himself all of Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian." Harald's stone has a figure of Jesus Christ on one side and on another side a serpent wrapped around a lion. The depiction of Christ standing in the shape of a cross and entangled in what appear to be branches is of note. One scholar suggested that this imagery was used to indicate that Christ had replaced the Norse pagan god Odin, who in one myth hung for nine nights in the tree Yggdrasill.

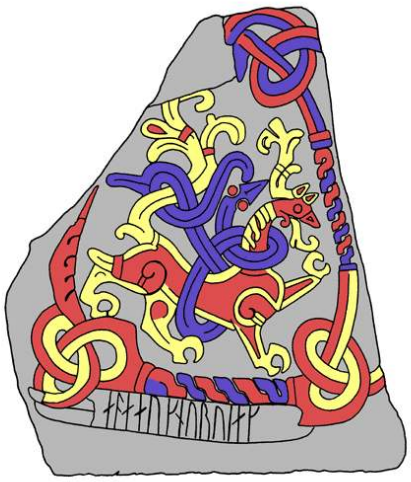
Harald's Stone: Carving of Christ: The figure of Christ on Harald's runestone. One scholar has suggested that this imagery was used to indicate that Christ had replaced the Norse pagan god Odin, who in one myth hung for nine nights in the tree Yggdrasill.

Harald's Stone: Inscription: This Jelling Stone, with its depiction of Christ and celebration of the Conversion of the Danes, is widely regarded as Denmark's "baptismal certificate."

Remnants of red pigment show that the Jelling Stones were once brightly painted. This practice was apparently widespread across Scandinavia, with runestones at locations such as Strängnäs Cathedral (Sweden) and Oppland (Norway) bearing similar hues . Replicas made from plaster casts in the twentieth century recreate the stones' polychromatic appearances.

Replica of Harald’s Stone: This plaster-cast replica gives us an idea of the original polychromatic appearance of the Jelling Stones. National Museum of Denmark

The reliefs on Harald’s Stone bear a striking resemblance to the styles of humans, animals, and abstract patterns that appear in illuminated manuscripts and on decorative arts in the British Isles of the Early Middle Ages . This common thread is a result of contact between the cultures through migration and invasion.



Animal relief on Harald’s Stone: The drawing of this stone depicts a colorful, stylized animal that bears a striking resemblance to similar forms found in the British Isles, such as in the hoard found at Sutton Hoo.

Norse Timber Architecture in the Early European Middle Ages

Archaeological finds of political and religious architecture suggest a significant mastery of woodworking and engineering in Viking culture.

Learning Objectives

Identify the different kinds of timber structures created by the Vikings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Viking long houses were typically inhabited by elite members of society. They were load-bearing structures with steeply pitched roofs that resembled inverted boats.
- A stave church is a medieval wooden church with post-and-beam construction related to timber framing. The wall frames are filled with vertical planks. This building technique is named after load-bearing posts.
- The churches are commonly divided into two categories: the first without free-standing posts and a single nave is often referred to as Type A, and the other with a raised roof and free-standing internal posts is termed Type B.
- The stave churches owe their longevity to architectural innovations that protected these large, complex wooden structures against water rot, precipitation, and extreme temperatures. Most important was the introduction of massive sills underneath the staves (posts) to prevent them from rotting.
- Archaeological excavations have shown that stave churches descend from palisade constructions and later churches with earth-bound posts. Similar palisade constructions have been found in buildings of the Viking era.

Key Terms

- **triforium**: A shallow arched gallery within the thickness of an inner wall, above the nave of a church or cathedral.
- **sill**: A horizontal member bearing the upright portion of a frame.
- **long house**: A structure typically consisting of one large room, intended to house the elite members of society.
- **Stave Church**: A medieval wooden structure with post-and-beam construction related to timber framing. The wall frames are filled with vertical planks. This building technique is named after wood-bearing posts.
- **timber**: A heavy wooden beam, generally a whole log that has been squared off and used to provide heavy support for something such as a roof. Historically also used in the plural, as in ship's timbers.
- **palisade**: A fence or wall made from wooden stakes or tree trunks, used as a defensive structure or enclosure.

Background

Timber architecture is used to describe a period of medieval art in which two distinctive wood building traditions converged in Norwegian architecture. One was the practice of building with horizontal logs notched at the corners, a technique likely imported east of Scandinavia. The other influence was the stave building tradition, which possibly evolved from improvements on the prehistoric long houses that had roof-bearing posts dug into the ground .

Although scant evidence exists of actual buildings from the earliest permanent structures, the discovery of Viking ships (i.e. the Oseberg) and stave churches suggest a significant mastery of woodworking and engineering in Viking culture . Not counting the 28 remaining stave churches, at least 250 wooden houses predating the Black Death of 1350 are preserved more or less intact in Norway. Most of these are long houses, some with added stave-built galleries or porches. As political power in Norway was consolidated and had to contend with external threats, larger and more durable structures including fortresses, bridges, and ultimately churches and manors were built with stone and masonry.

Long Houses

Very little archaeological evidence of actual buildings from the earliest permanent structures in the Viking era have survived. However, in the Lofoten archipelago in Northern Norway, a Viking chieftain's holding has been reconstructed at the Lofotr Viking Museum. In 1983, archaeologists uncovered the Chieftain House at Borg, a large Viking-era building likely established around the year 500 CE. Excavations later in the 1980s revealed the largest building ever to be found from the Viking period in Norway. The foundation of the Chieftain House at Borg measured 272 feet long and 30 feet high. After the excavation ended, the remains of what had once been the long house remained visible.

Viking Long House: Reconstructed long house in the Viking Museum in Borg, Vestvågøy/Lofoten, Norway.

Also known as mead halls, long houses typically housed the high-ranking members of Viking society, particularly royalty and aristocracy. From around the year 500 up until the Christianization of Scandinavia (by the thirteenth century), these large halls were vital parts of the political center. They were later superseded by medieval banquet halls.
Typically load-bearing with post-and-lintel entrances, long houses had sharply pitched roofs that bore a curve similar to that of a ship. In fact, the roofs of many reconstructed long houses resemble inverted boats placed atop the exterior walls. This shape was likely due to the climate, as pitched roofs allow snow to fall to the ground without causing collapse.

Stave Churches

The most commonly cited examples of timber architecture are the Norwegian stave churches. Until the beginning of the 19th century, as many as 150 stave churches still existed. Many were destroyed as part of a religious movement that favored simple, puritan lines , and today only 28 remain (although a large number were documented with measured drawings before they were demolished).

A stave church is a medieval wooden church with post-and-beam construction related to timber framing. The wall frames are filled with vertical planks. The load-bearing posts (*stafr* in Old Norse , *stav* in Norwegian) lend their name to this building technique. The stave churches owe their longevity to architectural innovations that protected these large, complex wooden structures against water rot, precipitation, wind, and extreme temperatures. Most important was the introduction of massive sills underneath the staves (posts) to prevent them from rotting. Over the two centuries of stave church construction, this building type evolved to an advanced art and science.

Stave Church: Example of a Norwegian wooden stave church: Stave church in Lom.

Forms of Church Construction

Archaeological excavations have shown that stave churches descend from palisade constructions and later churches with earth-bound posts. Similar palisade constructions are known from the buildings of the Viking era. Logs were split in two halves, rammed into the ground, and given a roof. This was a simple form of construction but very strong. The wall could last for decades if set in

gravel—even centuries. Remains of these buildings are found over much of Europe and are commonly grouped into two categories. Type A had no free-standing posts and a single nave as seen in the Renli Stave Church.

Type A: Reinli Stave Church: Reinli stave church with the old pillory and a single nave: Sør-Aurdal.

Type B had a raised roof and free-standing internal posts as in the Lomen Stave Church.

Type B Lomen Stave Church Interior: Interior from Lomen stave church depicting a raised roof and cross braces between upper and lower string beams and posts. Intermediate posts have been omitted.

Type B churches were often further divided into two subgroups. The Kaupanger group had a complete arcade row of posts and intermediate posts along the sides and details that mimic stone capitals . These churches gave an impression of a basilica . The other subgroup was the Borgund group. These churches had cross braces joining upper and lower string beams and posts that formed a very rigid interconnection, resembling the triforium of stone basilicas. Many stave churches had or still have outer galleries running around the entire perimeter, loosely connected to the plank walls. They probably served to protect the church from the harsh climate.

After the Protestant Reformation , no stave churches were built. Instead, new churches were composed of stone or horizontal log buildings with notched corners. Most old stave churches disappeared because of redundancy, neglect, deterioration, or because they were too small to accommodate larger congregations and too impractical according to new architectural standards.

Ornamentation of Stave Churches

Even though the wooden churches had structural differences, they give a recognizable general impression. Facade difference may conceal common floor plans, while apparently similar buildings might have significant structural differences. Certain basic principles were common to all church types.

Basic geometric figures, simple numbers, just a few length units, simple ratios, and perhaps proportions were among the theoretical aids all builders inherited. The specialist knew a particular type of building so well that he could systematize its elements in a slightly different way from previous designs, thus carrying developments a stage further. Ornamentation included intricate interlace patterns, stylized human figures, and mythological animals.

Hedal stave church portal: Drawing by G. A. Bull of the main portal in Hedalen stave church (c. 1853), depicting the intricate ornamentation.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- oseberg-ship-head-post.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oseberg_ship_head_post.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Osebergskipet-Detail. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Osebergskipet-Detail.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buckle from Oseberg Vikingship Buddha. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Buckle_from_Oseberg_Vikingship_Buddha.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oseberg longship. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oseberg_longship.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Norse. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/6644. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Viking Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oseberg Ship. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oseberg%20Ship. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 512px-The_Jelling_Stone_-_VIKING_exhibition_at_the_National_Museum_of_Denmark_-_Photo_The_National_Museum_of_Denmark_(9084035770).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26755810%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jelling-grosses-tier.gif. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Jelling-grosses-tier.gif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jelling Stones. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/7/7d/Jellingsten.1..jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Runesten i Jelling. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Runesten_i_Jelling.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Harald's Stone. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/6/66/Jelling_gr_Stein_3.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Interlace (Art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Interlace_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Viking Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jelling Stones. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jelling_stones. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 502px-Hedal_stavkirke_portal.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f3/Hedal_stavkirke_portal.jpg/502px-Hedal_stavkirke_portal.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Borg_VestvC3A5gC3B8y_LC0165.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c6/Borg_Vestv%C3%A5g%C3%B8y_LC0165.jpg/640px-Borg_Vestv%C3%A5g%C3%B8y_LC0165.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lomen.5. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lomen.5.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reinli Stavkyrkje, Su00f8r-Aurdal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Reinli_Stavkyrkje,_S%C3%B8r-Aurdal.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lom stavkyrkje A. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lom_stavkyrkje_A.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mead Hall. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mead_hall. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palisade. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palisade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Triforium. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Triforium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lofotr Viking Museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lofotr_Viking_Museum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Norway. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Norway%23Viking_and_medieval_eras. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stave Church. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Stave_church. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sill. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sill. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Timber. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/timber. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 16.2: The Vikings is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

16.3: The Carolingians

Carolingian Painting in the Early European Middle Ages

Carolingian artwork consists of frescoes and mosaics that reached a pinnacle of production under the reign of Charlemagne.

Learning Objectives

Describe Carolingian mosaics and paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Carolingian art comes from the Frankish Empire from about 780 to 900 CE, during the reign of Charlemagne and his immediate heirs. This period is popularly known as the Carolingian Renaissance .
- Carolingian paintings show an attempt to conform to Charlemagne's desire to revive the Roman Empire under a Christian banner.
- Some fragmentary frescoes have survived, allowing art historians to theoretically conceptualize Carolingian painting. Examples of surviving fragments include those at the Abbey of Saint John at Müstair and Saint Benedikt at Mals.
- Mosaics , created by assembling small pieces of colored glass, stone, pigments , and other materials, were created in Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel. Examples of well-preserved surviving frescoes can be found at Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen and Germigny-des-Prés.

Key Terms

- **mosaic**: A piece of artwork created by placing colored squares (usually tiles) in a pattern so as to create a picture.
- **fresco**: A technique of mural painting executed upon freshly laid lime plaster. Water is used as the vehicle for the pigment and as the plaster sets, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall.

Background

Carolingian art comes from the Frankish Empire from about 780 to 900 CE, during the reign of Charlemagne and his immediate heirs. This period is popularly known as the Carolingian Renaissance. The art was produced by and for the court circle and a group of important monasteries under imperial patronage .

Surviving examples of painting from this era consist mainly of frescoes and mosaics produced in present-day France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, northern Italy, and the Low Countries. These sites have allowed art historians to theoretically conceptualize Carolingian paintings. Paintings show an attempt to conform to Charlemagne's desire to revive the Roman Empire under a Christian banner. The figures in the frescoes, although relatively flat and posed in a stylized manner, display a degree of modeling and an acknowledgement of the body beneath the clothing. Their facial expressions and body language imply a sense of interaction, although few stand in profile and none turn their backs to the viewer . Surviving frescoes show a greater degree of modeling, a variety of poses, and a relatively naturalistic rendering of draperies and acknowledgement of the bodies beneath. Outside the elite circle that produced these works, however, the quality of visual art was much lower.

Frescoes

Various forms of Carolingian painting include frescoes, which reached a pinnacle of production under the reign of Charlemagne. A villa that featured the oratory of the Palatine Chapel belonged to Bishop Theodulf of Orléans, a key associate of Charlemagne. It was destroyed later in the century, but contained multiple Carolignian frescos of the Seven Liberal Arts, the Four Seasons, and the *Mappa Mundi* (Map of the World). Art historians have found numerous other Carolingian frescoes in churches and palaces that have since been nearly completely lost.

The Abbey of Saint John at Müstair, Switzerland is the site of exceptionally well-preserved Carolingian art. The original church has several significant early medieval frescoes from around 800 CE. The paintings are organized in five rows that stretch from the southern wall across the west wall to the northern wall. The top row features scenes from the life of King David of the Old

Testament. The next three rows show scenes from the youth, life, and Passion of Christ. The bottom row contains scenes from the crucifixion of Saint Andreas. On the western wall the rows are tied together with an image of the Last Judgment. The palette consists of a limited range of colors including ochre , red, and brown.

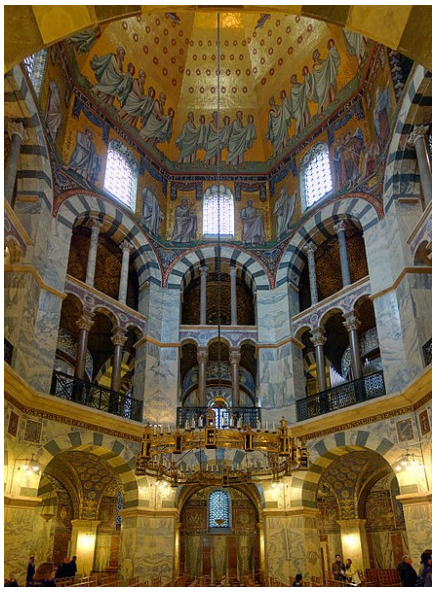
Fragments of Carolingian-era frescoes (early ninth century), St. John at Müstair: Art historian Dr. Bernd Schälicke examines the Carolingian frescoes on the north wall of the Benedictine Monastery Church of St. John at Müstair.

The frescoes at Saint Benedikt at Mals, Italy are contemporary with those at neighboring Saint John at Müstair. They belong to a limited set of surviving frescoes of the Carolingian period. The frescoes are mostly distributed in three niches in the altar wall, showing Jesus Christ flanked by pope Gregory the Great and Saint Stephen. On the walls separating the niches are donor portraits below a troop of 12 angels, and scenes showing Gregory writing his *Dialogi* and disputing with Paulus Diaconus (Paul the Deacon) alongside scenes showing Paul of Tarsus and a fragment of a scene from the life of Saint Benedict.

Saint Gregory Disputing with Paulus Diaconus (c. 825).: Church of St. Benedict, Mals, Italy.

Mosaics

Mosaics were created by assembling small pieces of colored glass, stone, pigments, and other materials. The mosaics were created in Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen, whose interior remains adorned with arch-to-dome mosaics. Like the Byzantine mosaics that influenced their design, those that adorn Charlemagne's chapel feature floral motifs and classicized figures in various poses against largely gold backgrounds.



Palatine Chapel at Aachen, interior view: The surviving mosaics begin above eye level at the piers or arches and span upward into the dome.

The most famous mosaic in Charlemagne's chapel showed an enthroned Christ worshiped by the Evangelist's symbols and the 24 elders of the Apocalypse. This mosaic no longer survives, but a restored one remains in the apse of the oratory at Germigny-des-Prés (806), discovered in 1820 under a coat of plaster and depicting the Ark of the Covenant adored by angels.

Ark of the Covenant, Germigny-des-Prés (c. 806): Restoration of the original that once adorned the Palatine Chapel. The subject seems drawn from illuminated Jewish bibles and relates to the *Libri Carolini*, possibly written by Theodulf, where the Ark is cited as divine approval of sacred images.

Carolingian Architecture in the Early European Middle Ages

Carolingian architecture is characterized by its attempts to emulate late Roman classicism, early Christian, and Byzantine styles.

Learning Objectives

Locate Carolingian architecture as it relates to pre-Romanesque, Roman classicist, Late Antique, early Christian, and Byzantine styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Carolingian churches are generally basilican like the Early Christian churches of Rome , and commonly incorporated westworks .
- The gatehouse of the monastery at Lorsch, built around 800 CE in Germany, exemplifies classical inspiration for Carolingian architecture built as a triple-arched hall dominating the gateway. The arched façade is interspersed with attached Roman- style classical columns and pilasters above.
- Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen combines the styles of the Western Roman and Byzantine Empires with contemporary innovations to create a unique Carolingian architectural style.
- The exterior of a westwork consists of multiple stories between two towers, while the interior includes an entrance vestibule, a chapel, and a series of galleries overlooking the nave . The westwork of the Corvey Abbey is one of the few intact surviving examples from the Carolingian period.

Key Terms

- **spolia**: The repurposing of building stone for new construction or the reuse of decorative sculpture on new monuments.
- **westwork**: The main entrance of a church, named for its (usually) west-facing orientation.
- **Carolingian architecture**: A style of northern European pre-Romanesque architecture belonging to the period of the late eighth and ninth centuries. It was a conscious attempt to emulate Roman architecture and thus borrowed heavily from early Christian and Byzantine architecture. However, innovations make this a distinct style all its own.

Carolingian architecture is the style of northern European pre-Romanesque architecture belonging to the Carolingian Renaissance . During the eighth and ninth centuries, the Carolingian dynasty (named for Charlemagne) dominated western Europe politically, culturally, and economically.

Carolingian architecture is characterized by its conscious attempts to emulate Roman classicism and Late Antique architecture. The Carolingians thus borrowed heavily from early Christian and Byzantine architectural styles, although they added their own innovations and aesthetic style. The result was a fusion of divergent cultural aesthetic qualities.

The gatehouse of Lorsch Abbey, built around 800 CE in Germany, exemplifies classical inspiration for Carolingian architecture, built as a triple-arched hall dominating the gateway, with the arcaded façade interspersed with engaged Corinthian columns and pilasters above. In addition to the engaged columns and arcades , the apse-like structures on either side of the gatehouse recall the ancient Roman basilicas , which were the sites of important government events.

Lorsch Abbey: Lorsch Abbey (800 CE) demonstrates the Roman classical inspiration the Carolingians took for their architecture, with a triple arch hallway dominating the gateway and interspersed with engaged classical columns.

By contrast , the Palatine Chapel in Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), with its sixteen-sided ambulatory and overhead gallery, was inspired by the Byzantine-style octagonal church of San Vitale in Ravenna. The chapel makes use of ancient spolia , conceivably from Ravenna, as well as newly carved materials. The bronze decoration is of extraordinarily high quality, especially the doors with lion heads and the interior railings with Corinthian order columns and acanthus scrolls. Like San Vitale, the Palatine Chapel is a

centrally-planned church whose dome serves as its focal point. However, at Aachen, the barrel and groin vaults and octagonal cloister vault in the dome reflect late Roman practices rather than the Byzantine techniques employed at San Vitale. Its round arches and massive supporting piers draw from Western Roman influence. A multicolored marble veneer creates a sumptuous interior. A monumental western entrance complex called the westwork is also drawn from Byzantine architecture.

Palatine Chapel in Aachen, interior view: The Palatine Chapel in Aachen (792-805) demonstrates the Byzantine influence on Carolingian architecture, evidenced by its octagonal style.

Carolingian churches are generally basilican like the Early Christian churches of Rome, and commonly incorporated westworks, arguably the precedent for the western façades of later medieval cathedrals . A westwork (German: *westwerk*) is a monumental west-facing entrance section of a medieval church. This exterior consists of multiple stories between two towers, while the interior includes an entrance vestibule, a chapel, and a series of galleries overlooking the nave. The westwork first originated in the ancient churches of Syria.

The westwork of Corvey Abbey (873-885), Germany, is the oldest surviving example. Like the gate house from Lorsch Abbey, the westwork of Corvey consists of a symmetrical arcade of three round arches at the base . This arcaded pattern repeats in the windows on the second and third stories. The heavy masonry throughout the façade recalls the massive appearance of the interior of the Palatine Chapel. On the upper stories of the center and towers of the westwork, a range of modified classical columns divide and accent the windows, also round arches.

Corvey Abbey: The westwork is the only surviving architectural component of the original Carolingian monastery.

Carolingian Illustrated Books in the Early European Middle Ages

The most common surviving works of the Carolingian era are illuminated manuscripts, which further developed the Insular book style.

Learning Objectives

Identify the major Carolingian manuscripts, the workshops and schools they were created in, and the traditions they drew from

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Carolingian manuscripts were likely produced largely by clerics in a few workshops around the Carolingian Empire. Each of these workshops developed its own style based on the artists and influences of that location and time. Among the most influential centers of production were the Court Schools of Charlemagne and Charles the Bald, as well as the Touronian and Rheimsian Schools.
- As the earliest producer of Carolingian manuscripts, the Court School of Charlemagne initiated a revival of Roman classicism yet maintained Migration Period art (Merovingian and Insular) traditions in their linear presentation, with no concern for volume and spatial relationships.
- The *Drogo Sacramentary* introduced the historiated initial to manuscript illumination. It became standard in manuscripts for the remainder of the Middle Ages .
- The *Utrecht Psalter* was perhaps the most important of all Carolingian manuscripts because of its innovative and naturalistic figurine line drawings. These became the most influential innovation of Carolingian art.
- The *Ebbo Gospels* introduced expressive and energetic lines that were unprecedented in illumination and influenced the art form for decades.

Key Terms

- **historiated**: Decorated with designs representing scenes from the text.
- **illuminated manuscripts**: A book in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia) and miniature illustrations. In the most strict definition of the term, this refers to books decorated with gold or silver, but in both common usage and modern scholarship, the term is now used to refer to any decorated or illustrated book from the Western traditions.

Illuminated manuscripts are the most common surviving works of the Carolingian era. This includes a number of luxury manuscripts, mostly Gospel books. They are decorated with a relatively small number of full-page miniatures , often including evangelist portraits and lavish canon tables drawn from Insular art in Britain and Ireland. Carolingian narrative images and cycles are rare but do exist. They tend to be mostly of the Old Testament, while New Testament scenes are typically found on the ivory reliefs on the covers.

Early Carolingian Manuscripts

Carolingian illustrators adopted the oversized, heavily decorated initials of Insular art and developed the historiated decorated initial to produce small narrative scenes. These were seen for the first time toward the end of the period, most notably in the *Drogo Sacramentary* (850-855). The historiated initial, a harmonious union of classical lettering with narrative scenes, had influence into the Romanesque period.

Drogo Sacramentary: Drogo Sacramentary (c. 850) depicts a historiated initial “C” which contains the Ascension of Christ. The text is in gold ink.

Carolingian luxury manuscripts were given treasure binding, rich covers with jewels set in gold and carved ivory panels. As in Insular art, these were prestige objects kept in the church or treasury . By contrast , working manuscripts featured a few decorated initial and pen drawings and were kept in libraries. One exception is the *Utrecht Psalter,* a heavily illustrated library version of the Psalms done in pen and wash and almost certainly copied from a much earlier manuscript. This was perhaps the most important of all Carolingian manuscripts for its innovative and naturalistic figure line drawings that became the most influential innovation of Carolinian art.

Ultrecht Psalter: From the Utrecht Psalter, ninth century. Naturalistic and energetic figurine line drawings were entirely new and became the most influential innovation of Carolinian art in later periods.

Carolingian Manuscript Workshops

Carolingian manuscripts are presumed to have been produced largely or entirely by clerics in a few workshops around the Carolingian Empire. Each of these workshops practiced its own style that developed based on the artists and influences of that particular location and time. The earliest workshop was the Court School of Charlemagne, then the Rheimsian workshop (which became the most influential of the Carolingian period), the Touronian style, the Drogo style, and the Court School of Charles II (the Bald).

The Court School of Charlemagne

The Court School of Charlemagne (also known as the Ada School) produced the earliest manuscripts, including the *Godescalc Evangelistary* (781–783), the *Lorsch Gospels* (778–820,), the *Ada Gospels*, the *Soissons Gospels*, the *Harley Golden Gospels* (800-820), and the *Vienna Coronation Gospels*. The Court School manuscripts were ornate and elaborate, reminiscent of sixth-century ivories and mosaics from Ravenna, Italy. The Court School of Charlemagne initiated a revival of Roman classicism, yet maintained Migration-Period artistic (Merovingian and Insular) traditions in their linear presentation, with no concern for volume and spatial relationships.

Lorsch Gospels: Ivory book cover with carvings. The Lorsch Gospels reflect its origin in the Court School of Charlemagne with its Late Antiquity Imperial scenes adapted to a Christian theme.

The Rheims School

In the early ninth century, Archbishop Ebbo of Rheims assembled clerical artists and transformed Carolingian art. The expressive animations of the Rheims School would have influence on northern medieval art for centuries to follow, far into the Romanesque period. One example was the Gospel *Book of Ebbo* (816–835), painted with swift, fresh, vibrant brush strokes that evoked an inspiration and energy unknown in classical Mediterranean forms. This emotionalism was new to Carolingian art. Figures in the *Ebbo Gospels* are represented in nervous, agitated poses. The illustration uses an energetic, streaky style with swift brush strokes. The style directly influenced manuscript illumination for decades, as seen in the *CodexAureus of St. Emmeram*. The evangelist portrait of Matthew in the *Ebbo Gospels* is similar to the illustration of the psalmist in the first psalm of the *Utrecht Psalter*.

Saint Matthew, from the *Ebbo Gospels* (816-835): Portrait of Matthew, depicting him sitting and writing in the foreground. The wavy lines that form the details on Matthew's clothing and the diagonal lines adding detail to the background and foreground are examples of the energetic subject matter in the *Ebbo Gospels*.

Other books associated with the Rheims school include the *Utrecht Psalter* and the *Bern Physiologus* (825-850), the earliest Latin edition of the Christian allegorical text on animals. Many of its miniatures are set unframed into the text block, which was a characteristic of Late-Antique manuscripts. For this reason, it is believed to be a copy of a fifth-century manuscript. This is one of the oldest extant illustrated copies of the *Physiologus*.

Bern Physiologus, Folio 12v (825-850).: Image of the text and drawings from the *Bern Physiologus*, showing the miniatures drawn unframed into the text block. This is typical of late Antique manuscripts, leading scholars to believe that it is a copy of a fifth-century original.

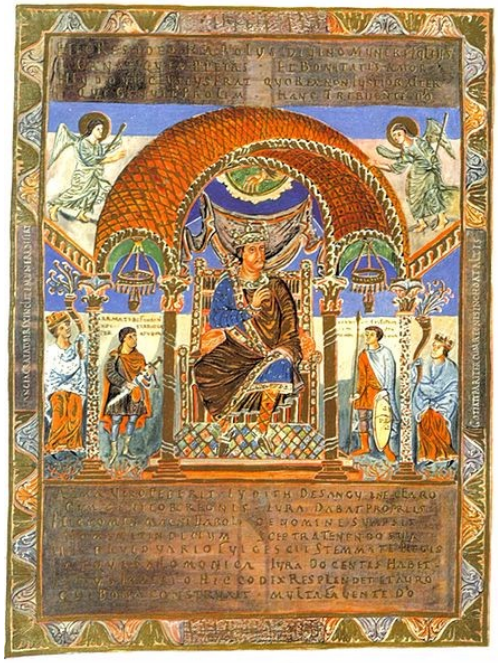
St. Martin of Tours

Another style developed at the monastery of St. Martin of Tours in which large Bibles were illustrated based on late Antique Bible illustrations. Three large Touronian Bibles were created. One of the best examples was the *Vivian Bible* (c. 846), commissioned by Count Vivien, the lay abbot of St. Martin of Tours, and presented to Charles the Bald. The Tours School was cut short by the invasion of the Normans in 853, but its style had already left a permanent mark on other centers in the Carolingian Empire.

Charles the Bald Court School

Charles the Bald established a Court School that fused Touronian, Rhemsian, and Charlemagne Court School styles. Several manuscripts are attributed to this institution, and the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram* (870) was the last and most spectacular. The school's location at the time is unknown as its previous base at St Martin's Abbey in Tours was destroyed in 853, but it had

probably moved to the Basilica of St. Denis outside Paris by the time of the production of the *Codex*. Seven full-page miniatures show the four evangelists, Charles the Bald enthroned, the Adoration of the Lamb, and a Christ in Majesty.



Charles the Bald, from the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram (c. 870): Depiction of Charles the Bald enthroned, surrounded by angels and saints. The Hand of God reaches down from beneath the red canopy, hovering over the emperor's head.

Carolingian Metalwork in the Early European Middle Ages

Carolingian metalworkers primarily worked with gold, ivory, gems, and other precious materials.

Learning Objectives

List the prominent examples of metalwork during the Carolingian era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Metalwork subjects were often narrative religious scenes in vertical sections, largely derived from Late Antique paintings and carvings. Those with more hieratic images were derived from consular diptychs and other imperial art.
- Important Carolingian examples of metalwork came out of Charles the Bald's "Palace School" workshop.
- Carolingian-era metalwork produced large statues cast entirely in gold that would influence the development of monumental , elaborate sculptures and altars made from precious materials in northern European medieval art.

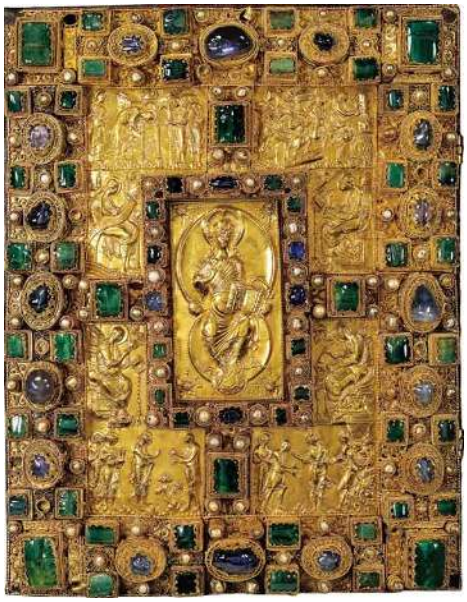
Key Terms

- **Metalwork**: The process of working with metal to create individual parts, assemblies, or large-scale structures. The term covers a wide range, from large ships and bridges to precise engine parts and delicate jewelry, and a corresponding range of skills, processes, and tools.

Carolingian-era metalworkers primarily worked with gold, gems, ivory , and other precious materials. For instance, luxury Carolingian manuscripts were given treasure bindings and elaborately ornate covers in precious metals set with jewels around central carved ivory panels. Metalwork subjects were often narrative religious scenes in vertical sections, largely derived from Late Antique paintings and carvings. Those with more hieratic images, such as the front and back covers of the Lorsch Gospels, were derived from consular diptychs and other imperial art.

Charles the Bald's Palace School Workshop

Important Carolingian examples of metalwork came out of Charles the Bald's Palace School workshop, and include the cover of the Lindau Gospels, the cover of the *CodexAureus of St. Emmeram*, and the *Arnulf Ciborium*. All three of these works feature fine relief figures in repoussé gold. Another work associated with the Palace School is the frame of an antique serpentine dish, now located in the Louvre.



Cover of the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram* (870): Gold and gem-encrusted cover of the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram*, 870. Produced by the Carolingian Palace School.

Under Charlemagne, there was a revival of large-scale bronze casting in imitation of Roman designs, although metalwork in gold continued to develop. For example, the Aachen chapel's figure of Christ in gold (now lost) was the first-known work of this type and became a crucial inspiring feature of northern European medieval art. Another one of the finest examples of Carolingian metalwork is the *Golden Altar* (824–859), also known as the *Paliotto*, in the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan (since damaged by World War II bombings). The altar's four sides are decorated with images in gold and silver repoussé framed by borders of filigree, precious stones, and enamel .

An Imperial Portrait

Charlemagne's personal appearance is known from a good description by a personal associate Einhard, whose biography of the emperor describes him as tall and well-built with a round head and wide eyes. This written portrait is confirmed by contemporary depictions of the emperor, his exhumed body, and sculptures believed to depict his likeness. One possibility is a bronze equestrian statuette once housed in Aachen Cathedral. Typical of sculpture in the round produced during the Carolingian period, the statuette is small, approximately eight inches high. The rider is depicted with a mustache, an open crown on his head, and a riding cloak fastened with a fibula. Like the architecture and painting of the time, this sculpture reflects Charlemagne's desire to recreate the Roman Empire, as it bears similarities with a large-scale bronze equestrian portrait of Marcus Aurelius from the second century. Similar to the ancient Roman emperor, the mounted Carolingian ruler wears a calm expression as he rides without holding the reins. Rather, he holds a sword (now lost) in his right hand and an imperial orb in his left. Unlike its ancient predecessor, the horse does not pounce on a missing enemy but calmly prances, reflecting the stateliness of the rider.

Equestrian Statuette of a Carolingian Ruler, Possibly Charlemagne (c. 870): Statuette of Charlemagne (?) mounted on a horse holding a sword on marble base. 8 inches high. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Several gold reliquaries, including one in the form of a portrait bust of Charlemagne, were produced under later dynasties, especially after his canonization in the 12th century.

The Wolf's Door

Bronze also features in many decorative elements in Carolingian westwork of Aachen Cathedral. Known as the Wolf's Door, the main entrance consists of heavy bronze leaves. Each leaf is divided into eight rectangles—a number that had religious symbolism in Christianity, as a symbol of Sunday, the day of the Resurrection. These boxes were framed by decorative strips, which are made of egg-shaped decorations. The egg was considered a symbol of life and fertility from antiquity. In Christian belief it was imbued with the even wider symbolism of Eternal Life. The door-rings in the shape of lions' heads are wreathed by 24 stylized acanthus scrolls—again to be understood at the deepest level through numerology. The Wolf's Door's imitation of the shape of the ancient Roman temple door signifies Charlemagne's claim to have established a New Rome in Aachen with the Palatine Chapel as the distinctive monumental building.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 640px-Scenes_of_saints27_lives.jpg. **Provided by**: WikiVisually. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/5a/Scenes_of_saints%27_lives.jpg/640px-Scenes_of_saints%27_lives.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 439px-Aix_dom_int_vue_cote.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/37/Aix_dom_int_vue_cote.jpg/439px-Aix_dom_int_vue_cote.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 378px-St_Johann_-_21.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/72/St_Johann_-_21.jpg/378px-St_Johann_-_21.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Germigny Des Pres 2007 01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Germigny_Des_Pres_2007_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- St. Benedikt (Mals). **Provided by**: WikiVisually. **Located at**: wikivisually.com/wiki/St._Benedikt_(Mals)/wiki_ph_id_20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saint John Abbey, Mu00fcstair. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_John_Abbey,_M%C3%BCstair. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palatine Chapel, Aachen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palatine_Chapel,_Aachen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- mosaic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mosaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Carolingian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolingian_art%23Mosaics_and_frescos. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mosaics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aachener dom oktagon. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aachener_dom_oktagon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Corvey_Westwerk_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a8/Corvey_Westwerk_2.jpg/360px-Corvey_Westwerk_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Torhalle Kloster Lorsch. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Torhalle_Kloster_Lorsch.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lorsch Abbey. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorsch_Abbey. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palatine Chapel, Aachen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palatine_Chapel,_Aachen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Imperial Abbey of Corvey. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Abbey_of_Corvey. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spolia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spolia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Carolingian Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolingian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Westwork. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Westwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codexaureus 02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Codexaureus_02.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 444px-Karl_II_der_Kahle.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/51/Karl_II_der_Kahle.jpg/444px-Karl_II_der_Kahle.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Utrecht 15v 2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Utrecht_15v_2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 434px-Saint_Matthew2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a6/Saint_Matthew2.jpg/434px-Saint_Matthew2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- BernPhysiologusFol12v.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/1a/BernPhysiologusFol12v.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- DrogoSacramentaryFol71vAscension. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DrogoSacramentaryFol71vAscension.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Aureus_of_St._Emmeram. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Utrecht Psalter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Utrecht_Psalter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bern Physiologus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bern_Physiologus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- First Bible of Charles the Bald. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Bible_of_Charles_the_Bald. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Drogo Sacramentary. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Drogo_Sacramentary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ebbo Gospels. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebbo_Gospels. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Carolingian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolingian_art%23Illuminated_manuscripts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Illuminated Manuscripts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/illuminated%20manuscripts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex Aureus Sankt Emmeram. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Codex_Aureus_Sankt_Emmeram.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Charles_Marville,_Hou0302tel_Carnavalet,_statue_of_Charlemagne,_ca._1853u201370.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Marville,_H%C3%B4tel_Carnavalet,_statue_of_Charlemagne,_ca._1853%E2%80%9370.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aachen Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aachen_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Equestrian statuette of Charlemagne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Equestrian_statuette_of_Charlemagne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Charlemagne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlemagne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Carolingian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Carolingian_art%23Sculpture_and_metalwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Metalwork. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Metalwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 16.3: The Carolingians is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

16.4: The Ottonians

Ottonian Painting in the Early European Middle Ages

The Ottonian Renaissance (951-1024) was a period of cultural and artistic achievement inspired by the revival of the Holy Roman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Describe the painting of the Ottonian Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Originally a ducal family from Saxony, the Ottonians seized power after the collapse of Carolingian rule in Europe and re-established the Holy Roman Empire. This coincided with a period of significant church reform.
- Ottonian art reflects the Ottonians' desire to confirm a holy Roman imperial lineage connecting them with the Roman emperors and their Carolingian predecessors. It fuses traditions and influences from late Roman, Byzantine , and Carolingian art.
- Ottonian ruler portraits are usually found in illuminated manuscripts and include motifs commonly found in ancient Roman iconography . Unlike classical art, however, these portraits lack a sense of naturalism , relying instead on iconography and hierarchical scale.
- Very few examples of wall painting from the Ottonian period survive. Those that have are in very poor condition or have been restored several times, often making it difficult or impossible to discover their correct dates of production.

Key Terms

- **iconography**: The branch of art history that deals with the symbolic value of an artwork's subject matter and content.
- **imperium**: The right to command the force of the state; sovereignty.

Sculpture and Painting

Originally a ducal family from Saxony, the Ottonians (named after their first King Otto I the Great) seized power after the collapse of Carolingian rule in Europe and re-established the Holy Roman Empire. Ottonian rule was accompanied by renewed faith in the idea of *imperium* (Latin, roughly translated as "power to command"), referring to the sovereignty of state over individual). This coincided with a period of significant church reform. Both combined to create the Ottonian Renaissance (circa 951-1024), a period of heightened cultural and artistic fervor and achievement.

The Ottonian Dynasty desired to confirm a sacred Roman imperial lineage that connected them to the Christian rulers of Late Antiquity such as Theodoric and Justinian and to their Carolingian predecessors, particularly Charlemagne. Ottonian art reflected this desire, fusing traditions and influences from late Roman, Byzantine, and Carolingian art.
The style is generally grand and heavy, sometimes to excess, and initially less sophisticated than the Carolingian equivalents. Additionally, the Ottonian style exhibits no direct influence from Byzantine art and less understanding of its classical models. Surviving paintings from this period exist predominantly in illustrations from illuminated manuscripts and a small number of mural and fresco fragments. In fact, illuminated manuscripts are the best source of painted imperial portraiture from the Ottonian Renaissance.

Ruler Portraits

Ottonian ruler portraits usually combine ancient Roman elements with contemporary (medieval) ones. Portraits are most frequently found in the dedicatory prefaces of illuminated manuscripts. Ottonian art eschews naturalism for a more abstract style, focusing on symbolism to convey deeply philosophical and theological concepts.

A portrait of Otto II enthroned depicts the emperor wearing a bejeweled crown in lieu of a laurel wreath and a large disc bearing the cross in place of an imperial orb. However, his upright posture and general pose with one raised hand somewhat recalls the

Colossusof Constantine, which sat in the Basilica Nova in the fourth century. Likewise, his attire slightly resembles a Roman toga, a sartorial mainstay among emperors and senators of ancient times. In a departure from classical art, however, Otto and the figures who flank him appear flat. Further, their scale is hierarchical, which organizes size in relation to importance. Otto is the largest of the five figures depicted. Lastly, the architectural space that surrounds the emperor fails to convey a sense of naturalistic recession into space.

Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*. *Otto II Enthroned* (c. 985).: Ottonian art was created to confirm a direct Holy and Imperial lineage as a source of legitimized power linked from Constantine and Justinian.

Wall Paintings

Although it is clear from records that many churches were decorated with extensive wall painting, surviving examples are extremely rare, usually fragmentary, and in poor condition. As a result, their dates of production are uncertain, especially since many have been restored. Most surviving examples are clustered in south Germany, although there are also important examples from northern Italy. There is a record of bishop Gebhard of Constance hiring lay artists for a now-vanished cycle at his newly founded Petershausen Abbey (983). Laymen may have dominated the art of wall painting, perhaps basing their designs on monastic illuminations. The artists seem to have been nomadic, regularly moving throughout Europe.

The church of St. George at Oberzell on Reichenau Island has the best-known surviving example of wall paintings. However, much of the original work has been lost, and the remaining paintings to the sides of the nave have suffered from time and restoration. The largest scenes show the miracles of Christ in a style that shows both specific Byzantine elements and similarity with Reichenau manuscripts such as the *Munich Gospels of Otto III*. They are therefore usually dated around 980–1000. Indeed, the paintings are one of the foundations of the case for Reichenau Abbey as a major center of manuscript painting.

Jesus and the Gadarene Swine (tenth century): Nave fresco in St George, Oberzell, Reichenau Island.

Ottonian Architecture in the Early European Middle Ages

Ottonian architecture flourished in the 10th and 11th centuries and drew inspiration from Carolingian and Byzantine architecture.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast Ottonian architecture with its Carolingian predecessor

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ottonian architecture first developed during the reign of Otto the Great (936-975) and lasted until the mid-11th century. Surviving examples of this style of architecture are found in Germany and Belgium.
- Ottonian architecture was inspired by Carolingian and Byzantine architecture and foreshadows Romanesque architecture in some features, including alternating columns and piers in regular patterns.
- Ottonian religious architecture diverges from the model of the central-plan church, drawing inspiration instead from the longitudinally oriented Roman basilica .
- The Ottonians adopted the Carolingian double-ended variation on the Roman basilica, featuring apses at both ends of the nave rather than just one. Churches make generous use of the round arch , have flat ceilings, and display the Ottonian appreciation of mathematical harmony by using modular planning.

Key Terms

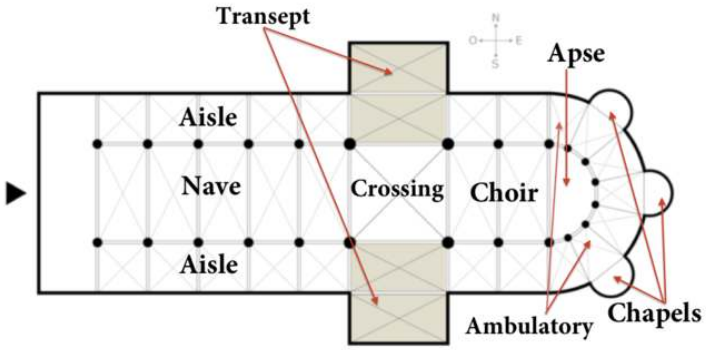
- **crypt**: A stone chamber beneath the floor of a church or other building.
- **crossing**: The junction of the four arms of a cruciform church.
- **ambulatory**: The processional around the east end of a cathedral or large church and behind the high altar.
- **apse**: A semicircular projection from a building, especially the rounded east end of a church that contains the altar.
- **capital**: The uppermost part of a column.
- **nave**: The middle or body of a church, extending from the transepts to the principal entrances.

Originally a ducal family from Saxony, the Ottonians (named after their first king Otto I the Great) seized power after the collapse of Carolingian rule in Europe and re-established the Holy Roman Empire. Ottonian architecture first developed during the reign of Otto the Great (936 – 975 CE) and lasted until the mid-11th century. Surviving examples of this style of architecture are found today in Germany and Belgium.

Ottonian architecture chiefly drew its inspiration from Carolingian and Byzantine architecture and represents the absorption of classical Mediterranean and Christian architectural forms with Germanic styles. Some features foreshadow the development of

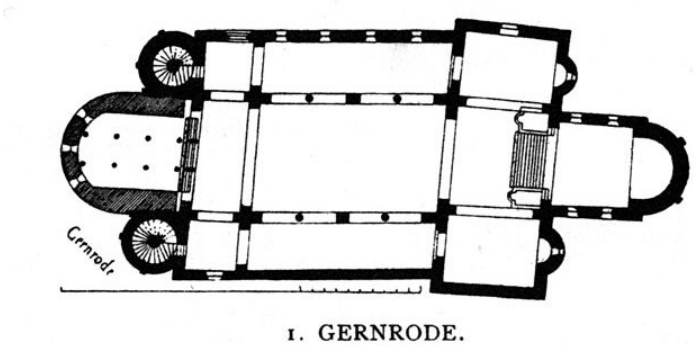
Romanesque architecture, which emerged in the mid-11th century. Its balance and harmony are a remarkable reflection of the high regard in which the Ottonians held the mathematical sciences. This is evident in the modular planning, which bases the measurements of each component of the interior on a single square unit multiplied or divided accordingly.

Barring a few examples influenced by the octagonal Palatine Chapel built by Charlemagne in Aachen, Ottonian religious architecture tends to diverge from the model of the central-plan church, drawing inspiration instead from the Roman (Western) basilica. This typically consisted of a long central nave with an aisle at each side and an apse at one end. When adopted by early Christians, the basilica plan assumed a transept perpendicular to the nave, forming a cruciform shape to commemorate the Crucifixion.



Plan of a typical Western basilican church: The arrow at the left marks the entrance to the church. Main seating for worshipers is located in the nave, while the aisles were originally used to accommodate large crowds on feast days. As churches began collecting relics (housed in the chapels) that attracted pilgrims, churches added the ambulatory. This connects the aisles to the chapels behind the choir, where clergy members perform their rituals.

The Ottonians adopted the Carolingian double-ended variation on the Roman basilica, featuring apses at the east and west ends of the church rather than just the east. Most Ottonian churches make generous use of the round arch, have flat ceilings, and insert massive rectangular piers between columns in regular patterns, as seen in St. Cyriakus at Gernrode and St. Michael's at Hildesheim.



Plan of St. Cyriakus at Gernrode: This plan shows the apse at both the west and east ends of the church, with a single transept dividing the nave from the east apse. The black circles and rectangles between the nave and each aisle mark the alternating columns (circles) and piers (rectangles).

One of the finest surviving examples of Ottonian architecture is St. Cyriakus Church (960-965) in Gernrode, Germany. The central body of the church has a nave with two aisles flanked by two towers, characteristic of Carolingian architecture . However, it also displays novelties anticipating Romanesque architecture, including the alternation of pillars and columns (a common feature in later Saxon churches), semi-blind arcades in galleries on the nave, and column capitals decorated with stylized acanthus leaves and human heads.

Church of St. Cyriakus, Gernrode, exterior: St. Cyriakus is one of the few surviving examples of Ottonian architecture and combines Carolingian elements with innovations that anticipated Romanesque architecture.

St. Cyriakus, interior : The painted ceilings were added during the 19th-century renovation, which also lined most of the walls with cut stone panels. The original Ottonian walls featured rough quarry stone masonry.

St. Michael's at Hildesheim (1010-1031) is one of the most important Ottonian churches, a double-choir basilica with two transepts and a square tower at each crossing . This layout can be seen from the exterior of the building. The west choir is emphasized by an ambulatory and a crypt . Adhering to the Ottonian appreciation for mathematics, the ground plan of the building follows a geometric concept in which the square of the transept crossing in the ground plan constitutes the key measuring unit for the entire church. The square units are defined by the alternation of columns and piers. Unlike St. Cyriakus, St. Michael's lacks a second-story gallery. However, ample light enters through a row of clerestory windows placed above the arcades dividing the name from the aisles.

St. Michael's Church at Hildesheim (1010-1031).: Unlike the Romanesque churches that would follow, Ottonian churches like St. Michael's had two apses (visible at the right and left ends of this photograph) and two transepts that divided each apse from the central nave area.

St. Michael's at Hildesheim, interior facing east.: Major differences between St. Michael's and St. Cyriakus are the clerestory windows in place of galleries and one pier placed after each pair of columns. The round arches at the east end of the divide the nave from the crossing and the crossing from the apse.

Ottonian Metalwork in the Early European Middle Ages

Ottonian metalwork ranged from jewel-encrusted objects of precious metals to large-scale bronze reliefs of stylized yet dramatic figures.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how Ottonian metalwork distinguished itself from Carolingian metalwork

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Ottonians were renowned for their metalwork in precious and non-precious materials.

- Jeweled processional crosses embellished with portraits and engravings are some of the finest examples of Ottonian art and sculpture.
- The cover of the *CodexAureus of Echternach* consists of an ivory plaque surrounded by gold repoussé reliefs produced in the elegant elongated style typical in Ottonian art.
- Ottonian metalwork use subject matter and iconography to refer to deep theological and philosophical concepts, as seen in the *Bernward Doors* and *Bernward Column* .

Key Terms

- **iconography**: Pertaining to the symbolic value of the subject matter or content of an artwork.

The Ottonians were renowned for their metalwork, producing bejeweled book covers and massive bronze church doors with relief carvings depicting biblical scenes, a process so complex that it would not be repeated until the Renaissance . Fine, small-scale metal sculpture flourished and exquisite book covers made of ivory and embellished with gems, enamels , crystals, and cameos were produced during this period.

The Cross of Lothair

Many of the finest examples of the *crux gemmata* (jeweled cross) date from Ottonian rule. These wooden crosses were encased in carved gold and silver and encrusted with jewels and engraved gems. Arguably the finest of these Ottonian jeweled crosses is the *Cross of Lothair*, dating from around 1,000 and housed in the Aachen Cathedral . The cross takes its name from the large engraved green rock crystal seal near its base , which bears the portrait and name of the Carolingian ruler Lothair II, King of Lotharingia (835-869). The cross was actually commissioned over a century later for Otto III, the Holy Roman Emperor . The cross bears a cameo of the great Roman emperor Augustus Caesar on one side and an engraving of the crucifixion of Jesus on the other. The cross thus represents both church and state in keeping with the Ottonian agenda, and connects the Ottonian emperors to the original Roman emperors.

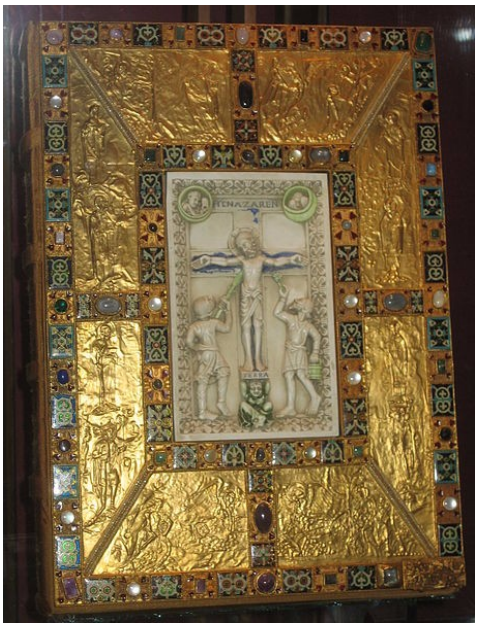
The Cross of Lothair (c. 1000): An example of the prestigious metalwork of the time. The front shows a cameo of the emperor Augustus.

The cross also depicts the Hand of God holding a wreath containing a dove representing the Holy Spirit in the crucifixion scene. This is the earliest-known appearance of the dove motif and the introduction of the entire Trinity into the crucifixion, iconography that has been repeated for centuries.

The *Codex Aureus of Echternach*

Ottonian relief figures from treasure bindings and cast sculptures are often more stylized yet more dramatic than their restrained Carolingian counterparts. The cover of the *Codex Aureus of Echternach* (1030-1050) dates from about 50 years before the manuscript. The metalwork is attributed to the Trier workshop set up by Egbert, Archbishop of Trier. It centers on an ivory plaque showing the Crucifixion. Surrounding the ivory plaque are panels with figures in repoussé gold relief. The style of the metal reliefs

differ significantly from the central plaque. These panels are set in a framework with larger elements made up of alternating units of gold filigree set with gems and cloisonné enamel with stylized plant motifs. Thinner gold bands set with small pearls run along the diagonal axes, further separating the relief images into compartments and creating an “X” that may stand for “Christ.” The figures are produced in an elegant elongated style that contrasts strongly with the forceful and slightly squat figures of the ivory.



Codex Aureus of Echternach (c. 980s): Front cover of the Codex.

Bronze Sculptures in Hildesheim

Ottonian metalwork also includes objects produced from non-precious metals. The most famous of these is the pair of church doors, the *Bernward Doors*, commissioned by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim. They contain biblical scenes from the Gospels and the Book of Genesis in bronze relief, each cast in a single piece. These powerfully simple compositions convey their meanings by emphatic gestures, a hallmark of the Ottonian style.

Bernward Doors, St. Mary's Cathedral at Hildesheim (c. 1015): These bronze doors bear relief sculptures depicting the history of humanity from Adam to Christ.

The figures on the *Bernward Doors* feature a progressive style of relief, leaning out from the background instead of extending a uniform distance. A particularly apt example of this is the figure of Mary with the baby Jesus in the depiction of the Adoration of the Magi. While her lower body is still in low relief, her upper body and Christ project out further and her head and shoulders are cast in the round . This unusual style was used for artistic reasons, not because of technical limitations.

Another striking Ottonian metal sculpture from is the *Bernward Column* (c. 1000), named for the same patron as the *Bernward Doors*. Produced for St. Michael's Cathedral in Hildesheim, the column depicts images from the life of Jesus arranged in a helix similar to Trajan's Column. Just as Roman victory columns depict the military deeds of the Emperor in an upward spiraling frieze , the *Bernward Column* depicts the peaceful deeds of Christ from his baptism at the Jordan to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Bernward Column (c. 1000): Bernward had this victory column cast from bronze in conscious imitation of Trajan's column and the Column of Marcus Aurelius in Rome.

The column is significant for the vitality of the figural relief, which is unusual for its time. The relief complements the *Bernward Doors*. Both artworks reflect Bernward's efforts to put his seat in the position of northern Rome in the context of the Ottonian Dynasty's renewed Christian Roman Empire. They also emphasize Christ as a model of just and godly kingship for the rulers. For this reason, the execution of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas is given a great deal of space .

Ottonian Illustrated Books in the Early European Middle Ages

Ottonian monasteries produced lavish illuminated manuscripts under the sponsorship of emperors, bishops, and other wealthy patrons.

Learning Objectives

Describe the purpose and style of illustrated books in the Ottonian Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The illuminated manuscript is one in which text is supplemented by ornamentation in the form of colored initials, decorative borders, and miniature illustrations, sometimes executed with the addition of gold and silver leaf.
- Ottonian illuminated manuscripts were used for display and most commonly consisted of liturgical books , including psalters , gospel books, and huge complete Bibles.

- Manuscripts sometimes included a dedication portrait commemorating the book's creation, in which the patron is usually depicted presenting the book to the chosen saint. Colored initials, borders, and marginalia also contain miniature portraits and other decorative emblems and motifs .
- Much Ottonian art reflected the dynasty's desire to establish a visual link to the Christian rulers of Late Antiquity and their Carolingian predecessors.
- The *Registrum Gregorii*, the *CodexEgberti*, and the *Pericopes of Henry II* are among the most important illuminated manuscripts of the Ottonian Renaissance .

Key Terms

- **psalter**: The Book of Psalms, often applied to a book containing the Psalms separately printed.
- **lectionary**: A book or listing that contains a collection of scripture readings appointed for Christian or Judaic worship on a given day or occasion.
- **liturgical book**: A book published by the authority of a church containing the text and directions for the liturgy or customary public worship of its official religious services.
- **scriptorium**: A room in a monastery set aside for the copying, writing, or illuminating of manuscripts and records.

The Ottonian Renaissance (circa 951 – 1024 BCE) coincided with a period of reform and growth in the church, providing an impetus for the production of religious art .

The Illuminated Manuscript

One of the most important art forms of the period was the illuminated manuscript, one in which the text is supplemented by ornamentation in the form of colored initials, decorative borders, and miniature illustrations, sometimes with the addition of gold and silver leaf. Ottonian monasteries produced some of the most magnificent medieval illuminated manuscripts, working with the best equipment and talent under the direct sponsorship of emperors, bishops, and other wealthy patrons.

The manuscripts produced by Ottonian scriptoria (monastic centers for copying texts) provide invaluable documentation of contemporary, religious, and political customs as well as the stylistic preferences of the period. The most richly illuminated manuscripts were used for display and were most liturgical books, including psalters, gospel books, and large, complete Bibles. These lavish manuscripts sometimes include a dedication portrait commemorating the book's creation in which the patron is usually depicted presenting the book to the chosen saint. Colored initials, borders, and marginalia also contain miniature portraits and other decorative emblems and motifs. Illuminated manuscripts were enclosed in ornate metal book covers decorated with gems and ivory carvings.

Presentation Portraits

Following late Carolingian styles , presentation portraits of the patrons of manuscripts are very prominent in Ottonian art. Much Ottonian art reflected the dynasty's desire to establish a visual link to the Christian rulers of Late Antiquity such as Theodoric and Justinian as well as to their Carolingian predecessors, particularly Charlemagne. For example, Ottonian ruler portraits typically include elements with a long imperial history as iconography , such as province personifications, or representatives of the military and the Church flanking the emperor.

Master of the Reichenau School. *Munich Gospels of Otto III* (c. 1000): Depiction of Roma, Gallia, Germania, and Sclavinia paying homage to Otto III, from the *Munich Gospels of Otto III*, one of the Liuthar Group.

Famous Artists and Scriptoria

Among the greatest artists of the Ottonian period was the anonymous Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*, who worked chiefly in Trier in the 970s to 980s. He derived his title from the miniatures in the *Registrum Gregorii* (a collection of letters by Pope Gregory the Great) and the *Codex Egberti*, a famous gospel lectionary manuscript, both for Archbishop Egbert of Trier (circa 950-993). However, most of the 51 images in the *Codex Egberti*, which represented events in the life of Christ, were made by two monks in the Benedictine monastery on the island of Reichenau on Lake Constance. Reichenau housed a scriptorium and artists' workshop that was one of the largest and most influential in Europe during the late 10th and early 11th centuries. It became famous for its style of gospel illustration in liturgical books. Other famous scriptoria of the Ottonian age were found at the monasteries of Corvey, Hildesheim, and Regensburg, and the cathedral cities of Trier and Cologne.

Codex Egberti: The dedicatory page of the Codex Egberti. The portrait is done in purple and gold and says "Egbertus" on top.

The *Pericopes of Henry II* (1002-1012) is a luxurious medieval illuminated manuscript made for Henry II, the last Ottonian Holy Roman Emperor . The manuscript is a product of the Liuthar Circle of illuminators, who worked in the monastery at Reichenau. The style of the Liuthar Group departs further from classical traditions. Its figures are flattened, stylized , and have exaggerated gestures. Backgrounds are often composed of bands of color with a symbolic rather than naturalistic rationale. As with depictions of Otto II and Otto III, figures' scale is relative to importance, not based on reality. For example, the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* depicts the angel as the largest and thus most important figure, followed by humans and animals, as was the commonly accepted belief in Christendom at the time. Manuscripts from the Liuthar Group introduced the gold background to Western illumination, a characteristic that would remain common until the Italian Renaissance.

Master of the Reichenau School. *Annunciation to the Shepherds*: *Annunciation to the Shepherds* from the *Pericopes of Henry II*, Liuthar Group of the Reichenau School.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 612px-Reichenau_Oberzell_Fresko1.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/81/Reichenau_Oberzell_Fresko1.jpeg/612px-Reichenau_Oberzell_Fresko1.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 352px-Meister_des_Registrum_Gregorii_001.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/64/Meister_des_Registrum_Gregorii_001.jpg/352px-Meister_des_Registrum_Gregorii_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ottonian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottonian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ottonian Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottonian_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Imperium. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/imperium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Iconography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 400px-Gernrode_interieur_naar_het_westen.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gernrode_interieur_naar_het_westen.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 450px-Hildesheim-St_Michaels_Church.interior.01.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/95/Hildesheim-St_Michaels_Church.interior.01.JPG/450px-Hildesheim-St_Michaels_Church.interior.01.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Dehio_47_Gernrode.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4a/Dehio_47_Gernrode.jpg/640px-Dehio_47_Gernrode.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Abbey Church of Gernrode. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_Church_of_Gernrode. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Transeptarm.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica#/media/File:Transeptarm.PNG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-St_Michaels_Church_Hildesheim.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/03/St_Michaels_Church_Hildesheim.jpg/640px-St_Michaels_Church_Hildesheim.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Crypt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Crypt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ambulatory. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambulatory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crossing (Architecture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossing_(architecture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Apse. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/apse. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pre-Romanesque Art and Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Romanesque_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ottonian Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottonian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abbey Church of Gernrode. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_Church_of_Gernrode. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- St. Michael's Church, Hildesheim. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Michael's_Church,_Hildesheim. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Capital. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/capital. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nave. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nave. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 456px-CodexAureusEpternacDEckel.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8f/CodexAureusEpternacDEckel.JPG/456px-CodexAureusEpternacDEckel.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-Aachen_Germany_Domschatz_Cross-of-Lothair-01.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/76/Aachen_Germany_Domschatz_Cross-of-Lothair-01.jpg/320px-Aachen_Germany_Domschatz_Cross-of-Lothair-01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 512px-Hildesheim-Christussaeule-Hildesia.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/83/Hildesheim-Christussaeule-Hildesia.jpg/512px-Hildesheim-Christussaeule-Hildesia.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 324px-BernwardstC3BCr.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1e/Bernwardst%C3%BCr.jpg/324px-Bernwardst%C3%BCr.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ottonian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottonian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hildesheim Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hildesheim_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cross of Lothair. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_of_Lothair. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex Aureus of Echternach. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Aureus_of_Echternach#Cover. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bernward Doors. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernward_Doors. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bernward Column. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernward_Column. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 365px-Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_005.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/cd/Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_005.jpg/365px-Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_005.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Codex Egberti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Egberti. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_004.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/57/Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_004.jpg/640px-Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_004.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pericopes of Henry II. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericopes_of_Henry_II. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Registrum Gregorii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Registrum_Gregorii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Scriptorium. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/scriptorium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Psalter. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/psalter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ottonian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottonian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lectionary. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectionary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Liturgical Book. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/liturgical%20book. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 16.4: The Ottonians is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

17: Romanesque Art

17.1: The Romanesque Period

17.2: Romanesque Architecture

17.3: Romanesque Sculpture

17.4: Other Romanesque Arts

17.5: Normandy and England

This page titled 17: Romanesque Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

17.1: The Romanesque Period

The Romanesque Period

Romanesque art was affected by shifting political powers following the Carolingian period and mobility during the Crusades.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the economics and politics of the Romanesque Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy in 1066 led to the construction of castles and churches to reinforce the Norman presence. Several significant churches built at this time were founded as seats of temporal and religious power or places of coronation and burial.
- The Crusades (1095–1270) brought about extensive migration and resultant spread of ideas and trade skills.
- The continual movement of people, rulers, nobles, bishops, abbots, craftsmen and peasants was an important factor in creating homogenous building methods and a recognizable Romanesque style , despite regional differences.
- The period saw Europe grow steadily more prosperous, and art of the highest quality was no longer confined to the royal court and a small circle of monasteries. Lay artists became increasingly valuable, and this category included most masons, goldsmiths, and painters by the end of the period.

Key Terms

- **lay**: Not belonging to the clergy, but associated with them.
- **Crusade**: One of a series of ostensibly religious campaigns by Christian forces from the 11th to the 13th century, mostly to capture the Holy Land from the Muslims who occupied it.
- **feudalism**: A social system based on personal ownership of resources and fealty between a suzerain (lord) and a vassal (subject). Defining characteristics are direct ownership of resources, personal loyalty, and a hierarchical social structure reinforced by religion.

The Source of Inspiration

Romanesque architecture was the first distinctive style to spread across Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Despite the misconception of 19th century art historians that Romanesque architecture was a continuation of Roman styles, Roman brick and stone building techniques were lost in most parts of Europe. In the northern countries Roman style and methods were only adopted for official buildings, and in Scandinavia they were unknown. The exception was several great Constantinian basilicas that continued to stand in Rome as an inspiration to later builders. However, these did not inspire the Emperor Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Germany, built around the year AD 800. Instead, the greatest building of the Dark Ages in Europe was the artistic child of the octagonal Byzantine Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, built in the sixth century.

A New European Empire

Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope in St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Day in 800 CE, with an aim of reestablishing the old Roman Empire. Charlemagne's political successors continued to rule much of Europe, leading to the gradual emergence of the separate political states that were eventually welded into nations by allegiance or defeat. In the process, the Kingdom of Germany gave rise to the Holy Roman Empire. The invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy, in 1066 saw the building of castles and churches that reinforced the Norman presence. Several significant churches built at this time were founded by rulers as seats of temporal and religious power or as places of coronation and burial. These include the Abbaye-Saint-Denis and Westminster Abbey (where little of the Norman church now remains).

The remaining architectural structures of the Roman Empire were falling into decay and much of its technology was lost. At the same time, however, the building of masonry domes and carving of decorative architectural details continued unabated, though the style had greatly evolved since the fall of Rome in the enduring Byzantine Empire. The domed churches of Constantinople and

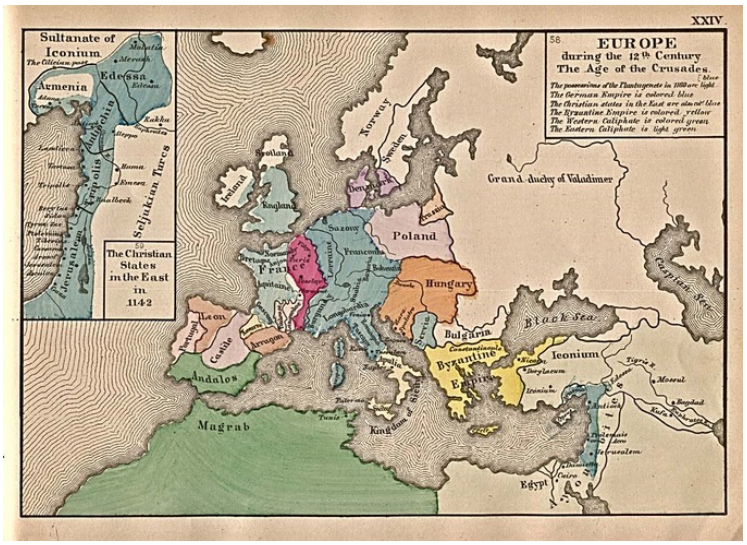
Eastern Europe had a substantial influence on the architecture of certain towns, particularly through trade and the Crusades. The most notable example is St Mark's Basilica, Venice , but there are many lesser known examples such as the church of Saint Front, Périgueux and Angoulême Cathedral .

Church of Saint Front, Perigueux, France: Image of the domed church, an example of the Eastern European influence.

Feudalism and Warfare

Much of Europe was affected by feudalism, in which peasants held tenure from local rulers over the land they farmed in exchange for military service. As a result, they could be called on for local spats as well as to follow their lord across Europe to the Crusades.

The Crusades (1095–1270) brought about substantial migration and resultant spread of ideas and trade skills, particularly the building of fortifications and the metalworking for the provision of arms, which was also applied to the fitting and decoration of buildings. The continual movement of people, rulers, nobles, bishops, abbots, craftsmen, and peasants was an important factor in creating homogeneous building methods and a recognizable Romanesque style, despite regional differences.



Map of Europe, 1142: Europe, 1142, Age of the Crusades.

Life became less secure after the Carolingian period, resulting in castles built at strategic points. Many were constructed as strongholds of the Normans, descendants of the Vikings who invaded northern France in 911. Political struggles also resulted in the fortification of towns by rebuilding and strengthening walls that remained from the Roman period. One of the most notable surviving fortifications is that of the city of Carcassonne. The enclosure of towns resulted in a style of tall, narrow townhouse with limited living space . These often surrounded communal courtyards, as at San Gimignano in Tuscany.

San Gimignano, Italy: Image of San Gimignano, famous for its medieval architecture, unique in the preservation of about a dozen of its tall, narrow tower houses.

Growing Prosperity

As Europe grew steadily more prosperous during this period, art of the highest quality was no longer confined to the royal court and a small circle of monasteries as in the Carolingian and Ottonian periods. Monasteries remained important, especially those of the new Cistercian , Cluniac , and Carthusian orders that spread across Europe. City churches, including those on pilgrimage routes and many in small towns and villages, were elaborately decorated. Indeed, these have often survived when cathedrals and city churches have been rebuilt, while Romanesque royal palaces have not. The lay artist, Nicholas of Verdun, became a valued figure known across the continent. Most masons and goldsmiths were now lay professionals rather than monastic clergy, and lay painters like Master Hugo were the majority by the end of the period. The iconography of their church work was likely determined in consultation with clerical advisers.

Romanesque Art

Romanesque art refers to the art of Europe from the late 10th century to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate Romanesque architecture, sculpture, and painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Romanesque style was the first to spread across the whole of Catholic Europe and thus the first pan-European style since Imperial Roman Architecture.
- Combining features of Roman and Byzantine buildings and other local traditions, Romanesque architecture exhibits massive quality, thick walls, round arches , sturdy piers , groin vaults , large towers, and symmetrical plans.
- The art of the period was characterized by a vigorous style in both painting and sculpture.
- Colors, which we can now see in their original brightness only in stained glass and well-preserved manuscripts, tended to be very striking.
- The tympanums of important church portals were carved with monumental schemes, often depicting iconography from Byzantine painting.

Key Terms

- **groin vault**: The intersection at right angles of two barrel vaults.

- **tympanum**: A triangular space between the sides of a pediment; the space within an arch and above a lintel or a subordinate arch, spanning the opening below the arch.
- **pier**: In architecture, an upright support for a structure or superstructure such as an arch or bridge.

Romanesque art refers to the art of Europe from the late 10th century to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region. The term “Romanesque” was invented by 19th century art historians to refer specifically to architecture of the time period, which retained many basic features of Roman architectural style—most notably semi-circular arches—but retained distinctive regional characteristics. In Southern France, Spain, and Italy, there was architectural continuity with the Late Antique period, but the Romanesque style was the first style to spread across the whole of Catholic Europe and thus the first pan-European style since Imperial Roman Architecture. Romanesque art was also influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting, and by the anti-classical energy of the decoration of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements was forged a highly innovative and coherent style.

Architecture

Combining features of Roman and Byzantine buildings along with other local traditions, Romanesque architecture is distinguished by massive quality, thick walls, round arches, sturdy piers, groin vaults, large towers, and decorative arcades . Each building has clearly defined forms and a symmetrical plan, resulting in a much simpler appearance than the Gothic buildings that would follow. The style can be identified across Europe, despite regional characteristics and materials.

Maria Laach Abbey, Germany: This abbey, founded in 1093, is an example of Romanesque architecture.

Painting

Aside from architecture, the art of the period was characterized by a vigorous style in both painting and sculpture. In churches, painting continued to follow Byzantine iconographic models. Christ in Majesty, the Last Judgement and scenes from the Life of Christ remained among the most common depictions. In illuminated manuscripts , the most lavishly decorated examples of the period included bibles or psalters . As new scenes were depicted, more originality developed. They used intensely saturated primary colors , which now exist in their original brightness only in stained glass and well-preserved manuscripts. Stained glass first came to wide use during this period, although there are few surviving examples.

Pictorial compositions usually had little depth as they were limited to the narrow spaces of historiated initials, column capitals , and church tympanums. The tension between a tight frame and a composition that sometimes escapes its designated space is a recurrent theme in Romanesque art. Figures often varied in size in relation to their importance, and landscape backgrounds were absent or closer to abstract decorations than realism , as in the trees in the “Morgan Leaf.” Human forms were often elongated and contorted to fit the shape provided and at times appeared to be floating in space. These figures focused on linear details with emphasis on drapery folds and hair.

The “Morgan Leaf. “: The “Morgan Leaf,”detached from the illuminated Winchester Bible of 1160-75. Scenes from the life of David, depicted in the Romanesque style with figures in various sizes according to importance and abstract landscape backgrounds.

Sculpture

Sculpture also exhibited a vigorous style, evident in the carved capitals of columns, which often depicted complete scenes consisting of several figures. Precious objects sculpted in metal, enamel , and ivory , such as reliquaries , also had high status in this period. While the large wooden crucifix and statues of the enthroned Madonna were German innovations at the start of the period, the high relief carvings of architectural elements are most evocative of this style.

In a significant innovation, the tympanums of important church portals were carved with monumental schemes, again depicting Christ in Majesty or the Last Judgement but treated with more freedom than in painted versions. These portal sculptures were meant to both intimidate and educate the viewer . As there were no equivalent Byzantine models, Romanesque sculptors felt free to expand in their treatment of tympanums.

The portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac: This image shows the carvings on the tympanums of the portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac Abbey, Moissac, France.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- San Gimignano. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:San_Gimignano.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pu00e9rigueux 3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:P%C3%A9rigueux_3.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Europe 1142. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_1142.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Romanesque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture%23Portals. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crusade. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Crusade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- feudalism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/feudalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lay. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lay. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Portal moissac. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Portal_moissac.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MorganLeafVerso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MorganLeafVerso.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Maria Lach 02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maria_Lach_02.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- groin vault. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/groin%20vault. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//biology/definition/tympanum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pier. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/pier. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 17.1: The Romanesque Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

17.2: Romanesque Architecture

First Romanesque Architecture

The First Romanesque style developed in the Catalan territory and demonstrated a lower level of expertise than the later Romanesque style.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between First Romanesque and Romanesque styles of architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The First Romanesque style developed in the north of Italy, parts of France, and the Iberian Peninsula during the 10th and 11th centuries.
- Abott Oliba of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll served as an important supporter of the First Romanesque style.
- The term “First Romanesque” was coined by architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch.
- First Romanesque, also known as Lombard Romanesque, is characterized by thick walls, lack of sculpture, and the presence of rhythmic ornamental arches known as Lombard bands .
- In contrast to the refinement of the later Romanesque style, First Romanesque architecture employed rubble walls, smaller windows, and unvaulted roofs.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **First Romanesque**: The name given by Josep Puig i Cadafalch to refer to the Romanesque art developed in Catalonia since the late 10th century.
- **Lombard band**: A decorative blind arcade, usually exterior, often used during the Romanesque and Gothic periods of architecture.

Development of First Romanesque Architecture

Romanesque architecture is divided into two periods: the “First Romanesque” style and the “Romanesque” style. The First Romanesque style developed in the north of Italy, parts of France, and the Iberian Peninsula in the 10^{th} century prior to the later influence of the Abbey of Cluny. The style is attributed to architectural activity by groups of Lombard teachers and stonemasons working in the Catalan territory during the first quarter of the 11th century. Abott Oliba of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll served as a particularly influential impeller, diffuser, and sponsor of the First Romanesque style.

To avoid the term Pre-Romanesque, which is often used with a much broader meaning to refer to early Medieval and early Christian art (and in Spain may also refer to the Visigothic, Asturias, Mozarabic, and Repoblación art forms) Puig i Cadafalch preferred to use the term “First Romanesque.”

Characteristics

The First Romanesque style, also known as Lombard Romanesque style, is characterized by thick walls, lack of sculpture, and the presence of rhythmic ornamental arches known as Lombard bands. The difference between the First Romanesque and later Romanesque styles is a matter of the expertise with which the buildings were constructed. First Romanesque employed rubble walls, smaller windows, and unvaulted roofs, while the Romanesque style is distinguished by a more refined style and increased use of the vault and dressed stone. For example, Abott Oliba ordered an extension to the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll in 1032 mirroring the First Romanesque characteristics of two frontal towers, a cruise with seven apses , and Lombard ornamentation of blind arches and vertical strips.

Ripoll Monastery: The Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll is a Benedictine monastery built in the First Romanesque style, located in the town of Ripoll in Catalonia, Spain. Although much of the present church includes 19th century rebuilding, the sculptured portico is a renowned work of Romanesque art.

Cistercian Architecture

The Cistercians are a Roman Catholic order whose monasteries and churches reflect one of the most beautiful styles of medieval architecture.

Learning Objectives

Relate Cistercian architecture to the rational principles upon which it is based

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architecturally speaking, the Cistercian monasteries and churches are counted among the most beautiful relics of the Middle Ages due to their pure style .
- Cistercian architecture embodied the ideals of the order and in theory was utilitarian and without superfluous ornament .
- The Cisterian order, however, was receptive to the technical improvements of Gothic principles of construction and played an important role in the spread of these techniques across Europe.
- Cistercian construction involved vast amounts of quarried stone and employed the best stone cutters.

Key Terms

- **Gothic**: Of or relating to the architectural style favored in western Europe in the 12th to 16th centuries.
- **Romanesque**: Refers to the art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **Cistercian**: A member of a monastic order related to the Benedictines, who hold a vow of silence.

The Cistercians are a Roman Catholic religious order of enclosed monks and nuns. This order was founded by a group of Benedictine monks from the Molesme monastery in 1098, with the goal of more closely following the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Characteristics of Cistercian Architecture

Cistercian architecture is considered one of the most beautiful styles of medieval architecture and has made an important contribution to European civilization . Because of the pure style of the Cistercian monasteries and churches, they are counted among the most beautiful relics of the Middle Ages. Cistercian institutions were primarily constructed in Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles during the Middle Ages, although later abbeys were also constructed in Renaissance and Baroque styles. The Cistercian abbeys of Fontenay in France, Fountains in England, Alcobaça in Portugal, Poblet in Spain, and Maulbronn in Germany are today recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Fountains Abbey: The abbeys of 12th century England were stark and undecorated – a dramatic contrast with the elaborate churches of the wealthier Benedictine houses – yet to quote Warren Hollister, “even now the simple beauty of Cistercian ruins such as Fountains and Rievaulx, set in the wilderness of Yorkshire, is deeply moving”.

Theological Principles

Cistercian architecture was based on rational principles. In the mid-12th century, the prominent Benedictine Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis united elements of Norman architecture with elements of Burgundinian architecture (including rib vaults and pointed arches , respectively), creating the new style of Gothic architecture . This new “architecture of light” was intended to raise the observer “from the material to the immaterial;”it was, according to the 20th century French historian Georges Duby, a “monument of app lied theology.” Cistercian architecture expressed a different aesthetic and theology while learning from the Benedictine’s advances. St. Bernard saw church decoration as a distraction from piety and favored austerity in the construction of monasteries, the order itself was receptive to the technical improvements of Gothic principles of construction and played an important role in its spread across Europe.

This new Cistercian architecture embodied the ideals of the order, and in theory it was utilitarian and without superfluous ornament. The same rational, integrated scheme was used across Europe to meet the largely homogeneous needs of the order. Various buildings, including the chapter-house to the east and the dormitories above, were grouped around a cloister and sometimes linked to the transept of the church itself by a night stair. Cistercian churches were typically built on a cruciform layout, with a short presbytery to meet the liturgical needs of the brethren, small chapels in the transepts for private prayer , and an aisle-edged nave divided roughly in the middle by a screen to separate the monks from the lay brothers.

Santa Maria Arabona: Abbey church of Santa Maria Arabona, Italy.

Engineering and Construction

Cistercian buildings were made of smooth, pale stone where possible. Columns , pillars , and windows fell at the same base level, and plastering was extremely simple or nonexistent. The sanctuary kept to a proportion of 1:2 at both elevation and floor levels. To maintain the appearance of ecclesiastical buildings, Cistercian sites were constructed in a pure, rational style, lending to their beauty and simplicity. The building projects of the Church in the High Middle Ages showed an ambition for the colossal , requiring vast amounts of quarried stone. This was also true of the Cistercian projects. Foigny Abbey was 98 meters (322 ft) long; Vaucelles Abbey was 132 metres (433 ft) long. Even the most humble monastic buildings were constructed entirely of stone. In the 12th and 13th centuries, Cistercian barns consisted of a stone exterior divided into nave and aisles either by wooden posts or by stone piers .

The Cistercians recruited the best stone cutters. As early as 1133, St. Bernard hired workers to help the monks erect new buildings at Clairvaux. The oldest recorded example of architectural tracing, Byland Abbey in Yorkshire, dates to the 12th century. Tracings were architectural drawings incised and painted in stone to a depth of 2–3 mm, showing architectural detail to scale.

Acey Abbey, France: The “architecture of light” of Acey Abbey represents the pure style of Cistercian architecture, intended for the utilitarian purposes of liturgical celebration.

Characteristics of Romanesque Architecture

While Romanesque architecture tends to possess certain key features, these often vary in appearance and building material from region to region.

Learning Objectives

Identify the defining characteristics and variations of Romanesque architecture found throughout Europe

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Variations in Romanesque architecture can be noted in earlier styles compared later styles; differences in building materials and local inspirations also led to variations across regions.
- Romanesque architecture varies in appearance of walls, piers , arches and openings, arcades , columns , vaults , and roofs and in the materials used to create these features.
- A characteristic feature of Romanesque architecture, both ecclesiastic and domestic, is the pairing of two arched windows or arcade openings separated by a pillar or colonette and often set within a larger arch.
- Columns were often used in Romanesque architecture, but varied in building material and decorative style. The alternation of piers and columns was found in both churches and castles.
- The majority of buildings have wooden roofs consisting of a simple truss , tie beam, or king post form . Vaults of stone or brick took on several different forms and showed marked development during the period, evolving into the pointed, ribbed arch characteristic of Gothic architecture .

Key Terms

- **capital**: The uppermost part of a column.
- **blind arcade**: A series of arches often used in Romanesque and Gothic buildings with no actual openings and no load-bearing function, simply serving as a decorative element.
- **ocular window**: A circular opening without tracery, found in many Italian churches.
- **vault**: An arched structure of masonry forming a ceiling or canopy.
- **Piers**: In architecture, an upright support for a structure or superstructure such as an arch or bridge.

Variations in Romanesque Architecture

The general impression given by both ecclesiastical and secular Romanesque architecture is that of massive solidity and strength. Romanesque architecture relies upon its walls, or sections of walls called *piers*, to bear the load of the structure, rather than using arches, columns, vaults, and other systems to manage the weight. As a result, the walls are massive, giving the impression of sturdy solidity. Romanesque design is also characterized by the presence of arches and openings, arcades, columns, vaults, and roofs. In spite of the general existence of these items, Romanesque architecture varies in how these characteristics are presented. For example, walls may be made of different materials or arches and openings may vary in shape. Later examples of Romanesque architecture may also possess features that earlier forms do not.

Walls

The building material used in Romanesque architecture varies across Europe depending on local stone and building traditions. In Italy, Poland, much of Germany, and parts of the Netherlands, brick was customary. Other areas saw extensive use of limestone , granite, and flint . The building stone was often used in small, irregular pieces bedded in thick mortar. Smooth ashlar masonry was not a distinguishing feature of the style in the earlier part of the period, but occurred where easily worked limestone was available.

Arches and Openings

A characteristic feature of Romanesque architecture, both ecclesiastic and domestic, is the pairing of two arched windows or arcade openings separated by a pillar or *colonette* and often set within a larger arch. Ocular windows are common in Italy, particularly in the facade gable , and are also seen in Germany. Later Romanesque churches may have wheel windows or rose windows with plate tracery . In a few Romanesque buildings , such as Autun Cathedral in France and Monreale Cathedral in Sicily, pointed arches have been used extensively.

Abbey Church of St. James, Lebeny, Hungary (1208): Characteristics of Romanesque architecture include the ocular window and the pairing of two arched windows or arcade openings within a larger arch, both open here at the Abbey Church of St. James.

Arcades

The arcade of a cloister typically consists of a single stage (story), while the arcade that divides the nave and aisles in a church typically has two stages, with a third stage of window openings known as the clerestory rising above. Arcades on a large scale generally fulfills a structural purpose, but they are also used decoratively on a smaller scale both internally and externally. External arcades are frequently called “blind arcades,” with only a wall or a narrow passage behind them.

Collegiate Church of Nivelles: The Collegiate Church of Nivelles, Belgium uses fine shafts of Belgian marble to define alternating blind openings and windows. Upper windows are similarly separated into two openings by colonettes.

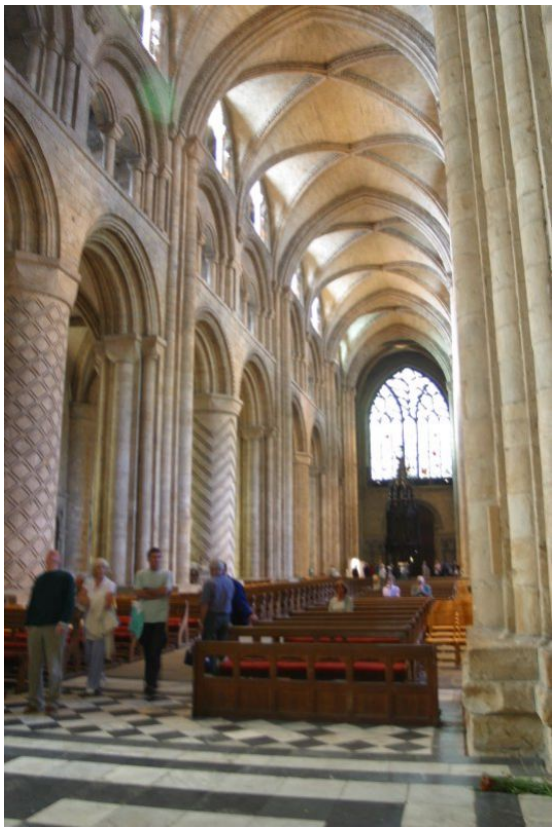
Notre Dame du Puy: The facade of Notre Dame du Puy, le Puy en Velay, France, has a more complex arrangement of diversified arches: doors of varying widths, blind arcading, windows, and open arcades.

Piers

Although basically rectangular, piers can often be highly complex, with half-segments of large hollow-core columns on the inner surface supporting the arch and a clustered group of smaller shafts leading into the moldings of the arch. Piers that occur at the intersection of two large arches, such as those under the crossing of the nave and transept , are commonly cruciform in shape, each with its own supporting rectangular pier perpendicular to the other.

Columns

Columns were often used in Romanesque architecture, but varied in building material and decorative style. In Italy, a great number of antique Roman columns were salvaged and reused in the interiors and on the porticos of churches. In most parts of Europe, Romanesque columns were massive, supporting thick upper walls with small windows and sometimes heavy vaults. Where massive columns were called for, such as those at Durham Cathedral, they were constructed of ashlar masonry with a hollow core was filled with rubble. These huge untapered columns were sometimes ornamented with incised decorations.



Durham Cathedral, England: Durham Cathedral has decorated masonry columns alternating with piers of clustered shafts supporting the earliest example of pointed high ribs.

A common characteristic of Romanesque buildings, found in both churches and in the arcades that separate large interior spaces of castles, is the alternation of piers and columns. The most simple form is a column between each adjoining pier. Sometimes the columns are in multiples of two or three. Often the arrangement is made more complex by the complexity of the piers themselves, so that the alternation was not of piers and columns but rather of piers of entirely different forms.

The foliate Corinthian style provided the inspiration for many Romanesque capitals , and the accuracy with which they were carved depended on the availability of original models. Capitals in Italian churches, such as Pisa Cathedral or church of Sant'Alessandro in Lucca and southern France, are much closer to the Classical form and style than those in England.

Corinthian style capitals: Capital of Corinthian form with anthropomorphised details, Pisa Campanile

Vaults and Roofs

The majority of buildings have wooden roofs in a simple truss, tie beam, or king post form. Trussed rafter roofs are sometimes lined with wooden ceilings in three sections like those that survive at Ely and Peterborough cathedrals in England. In churches, typically the aisles are vaulted but the nave is roofed with timber , as is the case at both Peterborough and Ely. In Italy, open wooden roofs were common, tie beams frequently occurred in conjunction with vaults, and the timbers were often decorated, as at San Miniato al Monte, Florence.

Vaults of stone or brick took on several different forms and showed marked development during the period, evolving into the pointed, ribbed arch characteristic of Gothic architecture.

Architecture of the Holy Roman Empire

Architecture from the Holy Roman Empire spans from the Romanesque to the Classic eras.

Learning Objectives

Compare the characteristics of Romanesque architecture to pre-Romanesque and later styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Holy Roman Empire existed from 962 to 1806 and at its peak included territories of the Kingdoms of Germany, Bohemia, Italy, and Burgundy.
- Pre- Romanesque architecture is thought to have originated with the Carolingian Renaissance in the late 8th century.
- The Romanesque period (10th – early 13th century) is characterized by semi-circular arches , robust appearance, small paired windows, and groin vaults .
- Gothic architecture such as the Cologne Cathedral flourished during the high and late medieval periods.

- Renaissance architecture (early 15th – early 17th centuries) flourished in parts of Europe with a conscious revival and development of ancient Greek and Roman thought and culture .
- Baroque architecture began in the early 17th century in Italy and arrived in Germany after the Thirty Years War. The interaction of architecture, painting, and sculpture is an essential feature of Baroque architecture.
- Classicism arrived in Germany in the second half of the 18th century, just prior to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire.

Key Terms

- **Ottonian Renaissance**: A minor renaissance that accompanied the reigns of the first three emperors of the Saxon Dynasty, all named Otto: Otto I (936–973), Otto II (973–983), and Otto III (983–1002).
- **Rococo**: An 18th-century artistic movement and style which affected several aspects of the arts, including painting, sculpture, architecture, interior design, decoration, literature, music, and theater; also referred to as Late Baroque.

Background: The Holy Roman Empire

The Holy Roman Empire was a varying complex of lands that existed from 962 to 1806 in Central Europe. The empire's territory lay predominantly in Central Europe and at its peak included territories of the Kingdoms of Germany, Bohemia, Italy, and Burgundy. For much of its history, the Empire consisted of hundreds of smaller sub-units, principalities, duchies, counties, Free Imperial Cities, and other domains.

Architecture of the Holy Roman Empire

Pre-Romanesque

The Pre-Romanesque period in Western European art is often dated from the Carolingian Renaissance in the late 8^{th} century to the beginning of the 11^{th} century. German buildings from this period include Lorsch Abbey , which combines elements of the Roman triumphal arch (including arch-shaped passageways and half- columns) with the vernacular Teutonic heritage (including baseless triangles of the blind arcade and polychromatic masonry). One of the most important churches in this style is the Abbey Church of St. Michael's, constructed between 1001 and 1031 as the chapel of the Benedictine monastery. It was built in the so-called Ottonic (Early-Romanesque) style during the Ottonian Renaissance .

Romanesque

The Romanesque period (10^{th} – early 13^{th} century) is characterized by semi-circular arches, robust structures, small paired windows, and groin vaults. Many churches in Germany date from this time, including the twelve Romanesque churches of Cologne. The most significant Romanesque building in Germany is Speyer Cathedral, built in stages from about 1030. In the 11^{th} century, it was the largest building in the Christian world and an architectural symbol of the power of the Salian dynasty , four German Kings who ruled from 1024–1125. Other important examples of Romanesque styles include the cathedrals of Worms and Mainz, Limburg Cathedral (in the Rhenish Romanesque style), Maulbronn Abbey (an example of Cistercian architecture), and the famous castle of Wartburg, which was later expanded in the Gothic style.

Speyer Cathedral (image by Alfred Hutter): Speyer Cathedral was built during the Romanesque era and is an example of Romanesque architecture; in the 11th century, it was the largest building in the Christian world and an architectural symbol of the power of the Salian dynasty.

Gothic

Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval periods, evolving from Romanesque architecture. Freiburg Cathedral is noted for its 116-meter tower, which is nearly square at the base with a dodecagonal star gallery at the center. Above this gallery, the tower is octagonal and tapered with a spire above. Cologne Cathedral is the largest Gothic cathedral in the world after Milan Cathedral. Construction began in 1248 and took until 1880 to complete—an intermittent period of more than 600 years. Because of its enormous twin spires, it also has the largest façade of any church in the world, and its choir boasts the largest height to width ratio of any Medieval church.

Cologne Cathedral: Cologne Cathedral is—after Milan Cathedral—the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, built over a process of 600 years.

Brick Gothic is a specific style of Gothic architecture common in Northern Europe, especially in Northern Germany and the regions around the Baltic Sea without natural rock resources. The buildings are mainly built from bricks. Cities such as Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, and Greifswald are shaped by this regional style; key examples include
Stralsund City Hall and St. Nicholas Church.

The dwellings of this period were mainly timber-framed buildings still seen in Goslar and Quedlinburg, the latter of which has one of the oldest half-timbered houses in Germany. The method of construction, used extensively for town houses of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, lasted into the 20th century for rural buildings.

Renaissance

Renaissance architecture (early 15th – early 17th centuries) flourished in different parts of Europe with the conscious revival and development of ancient Greek and Roman thought and culture. As in other areas of Europe, Renaissance architecture in the Holy Roman Empire placed emphasis on symmetry , proportion, geometry, and the regularity of parts as demonstrated in the architecture of classical antiquity , particularly ancient Roman architecture. Orderly arrangement of columns, pilasters , and lintels and the use of semicircular arches, hemispherical domes , niches, and aedicules replaced the complex proportional systems and irregular profiles of medieval buildings. The earliest example of Renaissance architecture in Germany is the Fugger chapel in St. Anne's Church, Augsburg; other works include St. Michael in Munich, Heidelberg Castle, Augsburg City Hall, and castles and manors throughout Wester, Thuringia, and Saxony.

Baroque

Baroque architecture began in the early 17th century in Italy and arrived in Germany after the Thirty Years War. The interaction of architecture, painting, and sculpture is an essential feature of Baroque architecture, which integrated new fashions to express the triumph of the Catholic Church and was characterized by new explorations of form , light and shadow and dramatic intensity . Zwinger Palace in Dresden illustrated the architecture of absolutism, which always put the ruler at the center thus increasing the spatial composition; for example, a magnificent staircase leading to the figure. In Rococo , the late phase of Baroque, decoration became even more abundant and used brighter colors. Other examples of Baroque church architecture include the Basilica of the Vierzehnheiligen in Upper Franconia and the rebuilt Frauenkirche in Dresden.

Die Frauenkirche in Dresden: The rebuilt Frauenkirche in Dresden was created by George Bähr between 1722 and 1743, and is an example of Baroque architecture in Germany.

Classicism

Classicism arrived in Germany in the second half of the 18th century. It drew inspiration from the classical architecture of antiquity and was a reaction against the Baroque style in both architecture and landscape design. The most important architect of this style in Germany was Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Schinkel's style, in his most productive period, is defined by its appeal to Greek rather than Imperial Roman architecture; his most famous buildings are found in and around Berlin.

Romanesque Architecture: The Church of Saint-Lazare

The Autun Cathedral, or the Cathedral of Saint-Lazare, is a Roman Catholic cathedral and a national monument in Autun, France.

Learning Objectives

Describe the architecture and sculpture of the Church of Saint-Lazare

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Famous for its Cluniac inspiration and Romanesque sculptures by Gislebertus , The Cathedral of Saint-Lazare epitomizes Romanesque art and architecture in Burgundy.
- Due to the veneration of relics in this period, the Bishop of Autun ordered the creation of a larger cathedral to house the relics and accommodate the influx of pilgrims into Autun.
- The column capitals and main façade of the church are embellished with realistic sculptures carved by Gislebertus; the artwork was designed to teach the masses about Christian ethics with dramatic scenes of heaven and hell.
- The cathedral has a ground plan in the form of a Latin cross, with an aisled nave , a plain transept , and a three-stage choir with a semicircular end.
- Many of the historiated capitals that adorn the columns within Saint-Lazare were carved by Gislebertus and include representations of biblical scenes.
- In the Last Judgement, Gislebertus successfully integrated the modern view of heaven and hell and created a sculpture to act as a visual educational device for illiterate individuals.

Key Terms

- **Cluniac**: Of or related to the Benedictine order at Cluny, Saône-et-Loire, France.
- **transept**: The transversal part of a church, perpendicular to the greatest length and between the nave and choir.
- **Gislebertus**: A French Romanesque sculptor, whose decoration (about 1120-1135) of the Cathedral of Saint Lazare at Autun, France—consisting of numerous doorways, tympanums, and capitals—represents some of the most original work of the period.
- **archivolt**: An ornamental molding or band following the curve on the underside of an arch.
- **triforium**: The gallery of arches above the side-aisle vaulting in the nave of a church.

The Autun Cathedral, or the Cathedral of Saint-Lazare, is a Roman Catholic cathedral and national monument in Autun, France. Famous for its Cluniac inspiration and Romanesque sculptures by Gislebertus, it epitomizes Romanesque art and architecture in Burgundy.

Due to the veneration of relics in this period, the Bishop of Autun ordered the creation of a larger cathedral to house these relics and accommodate the influx of pilgrims into Autun. The column capitals and main façade of the church are embellished with realistic sculptures carved by Gislebertus, and the artwork is a means of teaching the masses about Christian ethics with dramatic scenes of heaven and hell. Work on the cathedral began around 1120 and advanced rapidly; the building was consecrated in 1130. The designs were the work of the bishop Etienne de Bâgé, who was particularly influenced by the Cluniac abbey of Paray-le-Monial.

Autun Cathedral, ca. 1120-46: Exterior of Autun Cathedral, which stands in the highest and best fortified corner of the town, and through external modifications that have been applied to the building, the appearance has been much altered by the addition of a Gothic tower, a spire and side chapels in the 15th century.

Design Elements

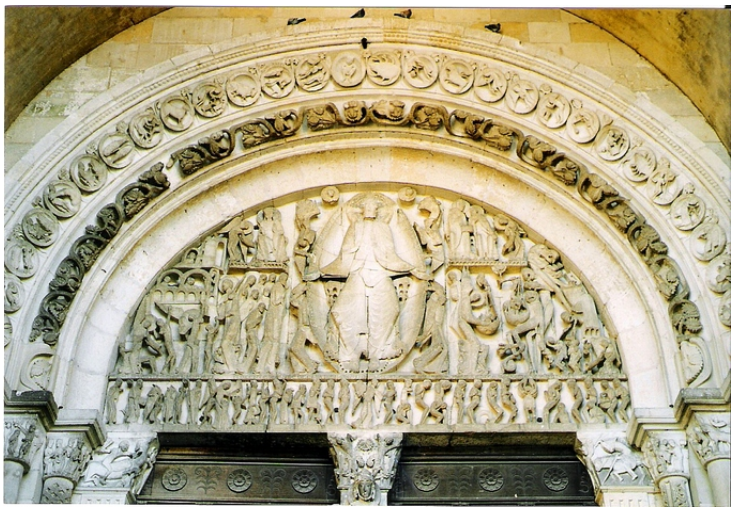
The interior of the cathedral has a nave and two aisles divided by massive columns with longitudinal carvings punctuated with decorated Romanesque capitals. The plan of the cathedral has a narthex or antechamber of two bays topped by two towers, followed by a seven-bay nave flanked by side aisles and a transept with the tower-surmounting cross. The nave elevation is composed of three levels: grand arcade , triforium , and clerestory , each marked by a cornice . The three-story elevation of Saint-Lazare was made possible by the use of pointed arches for the nave. Each nave bay is separated at the vault by a transverse rib . Each transept projects to the width of two nave bays and the west entrance has a narthex which screens the main portal .

Capital Sculptures

The cathedral of St. Lazare has a ground plan in the form of a Latin cross, with an aisled nave, a plain transept, and a three-stage choir with a semicircular end. Many of the historiated capitals that adorn the columns in Saint-Lazare were carved by Gislebertus. What makes Saint-Lazare a masterpiece of Romanesque art is the quality of Gislebertus' sculptures. These stone-carved scenes from the Bible appear on dozens of capitals in the nave and chancel. Specifically, Gislebertus created used the tendrils of the actual Corinthian capital to create an architectural frame for the narrative to develop. These portal capitals are carved with biblical and traditional scenes.

The West Tympanum

The West façade of Saint-Lazare contains the tympanum (1130–1135), signed *Gislebertus hoc fecit* (meaning "Gislebertus made this") within the portico . It is ranked among the masterpieces of Romanesque sculpture in France. The sheer size of the tympanum required support by double lintels and middle column to further bolster the sculpture. The left side of the tympanum displays the rise to the heavenly kingdom, and on the right is a portrayal of demons in hell with an angel and a devil weighing the souls on a balance. Zodiac signs surround the arch vault, with Christ in the center portrayed as a serene figure. Christ is placed in perfect symmetrical position with a balanced composition of elongated figures. Jesus is flanked by his mother, the Virgin Mary, and his apostles cast as penitents and observers of the last judgment. St. Peter guards the gate to heaven and looks on as resurrected individuals attempt to squeeze in with the assistance of the angels.



Last Judgement: Last Judgement by Gislebertus in the west tympanum.

In the Last Judgement, Gislebertus successfully integrated the modern view of heaven and hell and created a sculpture to act as a visual educational device for individuals who were illiterate. The tympanum inspired terror in believers who viewed the detailed high relief sculpture . Indeed, the bottom of the tympanum underneath the weighing of the souls has an inscription which states, "May this terror terrify those whom earthly error binds for the horror of the images here in this manner truly depicts what will be." The tympanum is framed by two archivolts: the inner has carved foliage, while the outer consists of magnificently detailed medallions representing the four seasons, zodiacs, and labors of the months.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Ripoll02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ripoll02.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Lombard band. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lombard_band. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- First Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lombard band. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lombard%20band. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- First Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/First%20Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Santa_Maria_Arabona.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercian_architecture#/media/File:Santa_Maria_Arabona.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-*

ShareAlike

- Abbaye_d%27Acey_30.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercian_architecture#/media/File:Abbaye_d%27Acey_30.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Fountains Abbey view02 2005-08-27. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fountains_Abbey_view02_2005-08-27.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Cistercian architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cistercians. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercians. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cistercian. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Cistercian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gothic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Durham.2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture#/media/File:Durham.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Capitel_en_la_Torre_de_Pisa.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture#/media/File:Capitel_en_la_Torre_de_Pisa.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nivelles JPG00 (5). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nivelles_JPG00_(5).jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Lebeny-churche1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture#/media/File:Lebeny-churche1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Le Puy en Velay 03. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Puy_en_Velay_03.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Romanesque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture%23Arcades. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture%23Arcades. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vault. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vault. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- blind arcade. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/blind%20arcade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Piers. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Piers. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- capital. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/capital. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ocular window. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/ocular%20window. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Speyer---Cathedral---South-View---(Gentry). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Speyer---Cathedral---South-View---(Gentry).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cologne Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cologne_Cathedral.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Die Frauenkirche in Dresden 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Die_Frauenkirche_in_Dresden_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Renaissance architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cologne Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne_Cathedral#Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baroque Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Holy Roman Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Germany. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Germany. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ottonian Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottonian%20Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Autun cathedrale. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Autun_cathedrale.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Autun St Lazare Tympanon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Autun_St_Lazare_Tympanon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saint-Lazare Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Lazare_Cathedral%23St._Lazare_Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saint-Lazare Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Lazare_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saint-Lazare Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Lazare_Cathedral%23Saint_Lazare_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- triforium. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/triforium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- transept. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/transept. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- archivolt. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/archivolt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- cathedral. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 17.2: Romanesque Architecture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

17.3: Romanesque Sculpture

Romanesque Sculpture

Sculpture from the Romanesque period saw advances in metalwork, enamels, and figurative friezes and scenes found in architecture.

Learning Objectives

Examine the characteristics of Romanesque sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Romanesque art is the art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- Sophisticated precious objects in metalwork , ivories , and enamels held high status in the Romanesque period.
- Many spectacular shrines made to hold relics have survived, such as the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral by Nicholas of Verdun.
- Large reliquaries and altar frontals were built around a wooden frame, but smaller caskets were made entirely of metal and enamel. A few secular pieces such as mirror cases, jewelry, and clasps have also survived.
- During the 11th and 12th centuries, figurative sculpture was revived as architectural reliefs became a hallmark of the later Romanesque period. Figurative sculpture was based largely on manuscript illumination and small-scale sculpture in ivory and metal.
- Most Romanesque sculpture is pictorial and biblical in subject. A great variety of themes are found on building capitals , including scenes of Creation and the Fall of Man, the life of Christ, and the Old Testament.

Key Terms

- **portal**: An opening in a wall of a building, gate, or fortification, especially a grand entrance to an important structure.
- **enamel**: A material made by fusing powdered glass to a substrate by firing, usually between 750 and 850 °C (1,380 and 1,560 °F); the powder melts, flows, and then hardens to a smooth, durable vitreous coating on metal, glass, or ceramics.
- **tympanum**: In architecture, the semi-circular or triangular decorative wall surface over an entrance, bounded by a lintel and arch and often containing sculpture or other imagery or ornaments.

Background: Romanesque Art

Romanesque art is the art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region. The preceding period is known as the Pre-Romanesque period. The term was invented by 19th-century art historians specifically to refer to Romanesque architecture, which retained many features of Roman architectural style (notably round-headed arches , barrel vaults , apses , and acanthus-leaf decoration) while also developing distinctive characteristics. Southern France, Spain, and Italy showed architectural continuity with the Late Antique, but the Romanesque style was the first to spread across the whole of Catholic Europe from Sicily to Scandinavia. Romanesque art was also greatly influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting, and by the anti-classical energy of the decoration of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements was forged a highly innovative and coherent style.

Romanesque Sculpture

Metalwork, Enamels, and Ivories

Precious objects in metalwork, ivories, and enamels held high status in the Romanesque period. The creators of these objects are more well-known than contemporary painters, illuminators, and architect-masons. Metalwork, including decoration in enamel, became very sophisticated. Many spectacular shrines made to hold relics have survived, of which the best known is the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral by Nicholas of Verdun (circa 1180–1225). The bronze Gloucester candlestick is a superb example of metal casting , with intricate and energetic qualities that draw on manuscript painting. The Stavelot Triptych and

Reliquary of St. Maurus are other examples of Mosan enamelwork. Large reliquaries and altar frontals were built around a wooden frame, but smaller caskets were made entirely of metal and enamel. A few secular pieces such as mirror cases, jewelry, and clasps have also survived, but these no doubt under-represent the amount of fine metalwork owned by the nobility.

The Gloucester candlestick, early 12th century: The bronze Gloucester candlestick is a superb example of metal casting, with intricate and energetic qualities that draw on manuscript painting.

Architectural Sculpture

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the tradition of carving large works in stone and sculpting figures in bronze died out, as it did for religious reasons in the Byzantine world. Some life-size sculpture was done in stucco or plaster, but surviving examples are rare. The best-known surviving sculpture of Proto-Romanesque Europe is the life-size wooden crucifix commissioned by Archbishop Gero of Cologne in about 960–65, apparently the prototype of a popular form . Beginning in the 12th centure, these were set up on a beam below the chancel arch, known in English as a rood, and flanked by figures of the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist.

During the 11th and 12th centuries, figurative sculpture was revived as architectural reliefs became a hallmark of the late Romanesque period. Figurative sculpture was based largely on manuscript illumination and small-scale sculpture in ivory and metal. The extensive friezes sculpted on Armenian and Syriac churches were another likely influence. These sources together produced a distinct style that can be recognized across Europe, although the most spectacular sculptural projects are concentrated in South-Western France, Northern Spain, and Italy.

Images in metalwork were frequently embossed . The resulting surface had two main planes with incised details. This treatment was adapted to stone carving and is often seen in the tympanum above the portal , where the imagery of Christ in Majesty with the symbols of the Four Evangelists is drawn directly from the gilt covers of medieval gospel books. This style of doorway occurs in many places and continued into the Gothic period.

Most Romanesque sculpture is pictorial and biblical in subject. A great variety of themes are found on building capitals, including scenes of Creation and the Fall of Man, the life of Christ, and Old Testament depictions of his Death and Resurrection, such as Jonah and the Whale and Daniel in the lions' den. Many Nativity scenes occur, most frequently the Three Kings. Some Romanesque churches feature an extensive sculptural scheme which covers the area surrounding the portal and sometimes much of the facade. The sculptural schemes were designed to convey the message that Christian believers should recognize wrongdoing,

repent, and be redeemed. The Last Judgement reminds the believer to repent, while the carved or painted Crucifix, displayed prominently within the church, reminds the sinner of redemption.

Vézelay Abbey, Burgundy, France: The tympanum of Vézelay Abbey in Burgundy, completed in the 1130s, has a great deal of decorative spiral detail in the draperies.

Romanesque Sculpture: Majestat Batlló

The Batlló Majesty is one of the finest and best-preserved examples of Catalan sculptures from the 12th century.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the triumphant symbolism and Romanesque characteristics of the Batlló Majesty.

Key Takeaways

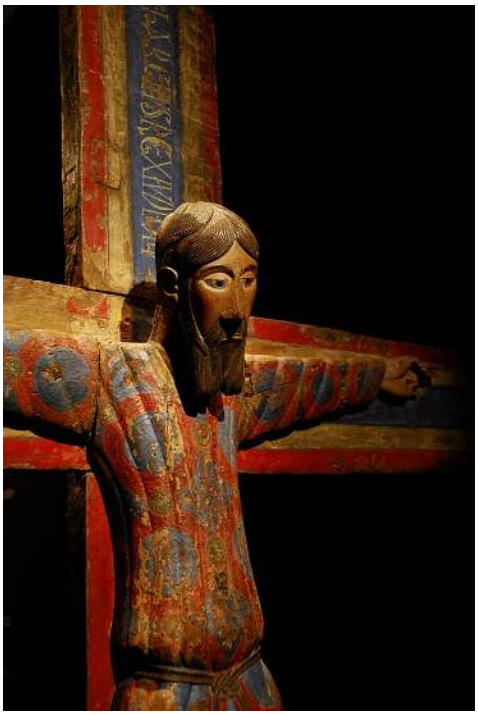
Key Points

- Carved wooden images were a fundamental element in churches as objects of worship. One of the most elaborate types in Catalonia was the Christ in Majesty: images of Christ on the Cross that symbolize his triumph over death.
- The most outstanding of these is the Majestat Batlló, also one of the finest and best-preserved examples of Catalan sculptures.
- One of the striking features of the Majestat Batlló compared to Catalan sculptures is the well-conserved polychromy .
- The frontal geometric composition of Christ's tunic decorated in circles and floral motifs is reminiscent of the refined Byzantine and Hispano-Moorish fabrics held in high esteem in the Christian West during this time. The chronology of the Majestat Batlló is difficult to date; the inscription on the cross and the painting could be placed in the 11th century, although other authors date it back to the 12th century.

Key Terms

- **polychromy**: The practice of combining different colors, especially brilliant ones, in an artistic way.
- **abacus**: The uppermost portion of the capital of a column, immediately under the architrave.
- **iconographic**: Of or pertaining to a religious icon.

The Majestat Batlló, or Batlló Majesty, is a 12th century Romanesque polychrome wood carving now held in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona, Catalonia. Carved wooden images were a fundamental element in churches as objects of worship, and one of the most elaborate motifs was the *Christ in Majesty:* images of Christ on the Cross that symbolize his triumph over death. The most outstanding of these is the Majestat Batlló, also one of the finest and best-preserved examples of Catalan sculpture.



Majestat Batlló : The Majestat Batlló is a 12th century Romanesque wooden crucifix, now in the National Art Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona. It is one of the most elaborate examples in Catalonia of an image of Christ on the Cross symbolizing his triumph over death.

Symbolism and Description

The Majestat Batlló is a large wooden crucifix that presents Christ bearing his suffering with noble stoicism and triumph. He is wearing a *colobium*, or a long, sleeveless tunic. Although the corners of his mouth turn slightly downward, Christ's open eyes and unfurrowed brow create the impression of a self-possessed impassivity. A Latin inscription above his head reads, "JHS NAZARENUS REX IUDEORUM" ("Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews"), as in biblical accounts (Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, John 19:19).

One of the striking features of the Batlló Majesty compared to Catalan sculpture is the well-conserved polychromy. Christ's *colobium*, in imitation of rich oriental silk, is decorated with blue floral designs surrounded by circular red frames embellished with dots and circles. A thin belt with an elaborate interlace knot pulls the tunic in above Christ's hips, making the fabric above it swell out slightly and curving the path of its flat, wide vertical folds. Such robes are linked with royal and priestly functions and conveyed a message of strength to the audience. They can be seen as a visualization of the Apocalyptic Christ from the Book of Revelation.

The frontal geometric composition of the tunic decorated in circles and floral motifs is reminiscent of the refined Byzantine and Hispano-Moorish fabrics held in high esteem in the Christian West during this time. The great reference for this type was the Volto Santo in Lucca (Tuscany, Italy), regarded as having miraculous origins and as the object of pilgrimage and extraordinary devotion from the end of the 11th century. The iconographic tradition of Jesus in a *colobium* dates to 586 CE in a manuscript of the Syriac Gospels called the Rabbula Gospels, written by the monk Rabbula somewhere in Mesopotamia . The tradition of depicting Christ in such costume was likely brought to Catalonia by artisans from Pisa, who arrived in 1114 to help Ramon Berenguer III, Count of Barcelona, in his conquest of the Balearic Islands.

Chronology

The Majestat Batlló is difficult to date, but the inscription on the cross and the painting could be placed in the 11th century. However, other authors date it back to the 12th century based on the painting's similarity to others from the area of Ripoll, mid-12th century. The tunic is analogous to an Islamic motif of the cloister of the abbey of Saint-Pierre de Moissac, which seems to prove the spread of this style during the Romanesque period.

Romanesque Sculpture: Mary as the Throne of Wisdom

Mary as the Throne of Wisdom was a popular biblical theme represented throughout Romanesque sculpture.

Learning Objectives

Compare the various depictions of Mary seated on the Throne of Wisdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Images of Mary as the Throne of Wisdom are especially prevalent in Roman Catholic art.
- When the Virgin is depicted in *sedes sapientiae* (“Throne of Wisdom”) icons and sculptural representations, she is seated on a throne with the Christ Child on her lap.
- This concept of Mary likens her to the Throne of Solomon, referring to her status as a vessel of the incarnation carrying the Holy Child. The *sedes sapientiae* icon also appeared in Romanesque illuminated manuscripts , frescoes , mosaics , and seals.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **iconography**: The branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images.

Background

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the epithet “the Seat of Wisdom” or “Throne of Wisdom” is one of many devotional titles for the Mother of God. The phrase was coined in the 11th and 12th centuries by Peter Damiani and Guibert de Nogent and likens Mary to the Throne of Solomon, referring to her status as a vessel carrying the Holy Child. As the phrase associates the Blessed Virgin with glory and teaching, Madonnas in this tradition are especially popular in Catholic imagery .

Mary as the Throne of Wisdom: Madonna as Seat of Wisdom, 1199, inscribed as by Presbyter Martinus, from the Camaldolese abbey in Borgo San Sepolcro near Arezzo, Italy.

Cultural History

In Christian iconography , s*edes sapientiae* (“The Throne of Wisdom”) is an icon of the Mother of God in majesty. When the Virgin is depicted in *sedes sapientiae* icons and sculptural representations, she is seated on a throne with the Christ Child on her lap.

This type of Madonna image was a variant of the Byzantine *Hodegetria* type, in which the Virgin Mary is depicted holding the child Jesus at her side while pointing to him as the source of salvation for mankind. It appeared in a wide range of sculptural and painted images in Western Europe, especially near 1200 CE. In these representations, structural elements of the throne invariably appear, even if only handholds and front legs. The Virgin’s feet often rest on a low stool. Later Gothic sculptures are more explicitly identifiable with the Throne of Solomon, where “two lions stood, one at each hand. And twelve little lions stood upon the six steps on the one side and on the other” (I Kings 10, 19-20).

Aechen Cathedral, 11th Century: The cloisonné enamel donor plaque with the donor's portrait and the enthroned Madonna, on the processional Cross of Mathilde, Ottonian, early 11th century (Aachen Cathedral)

In addition to Romanesque sculpture, the *sedes sapientiae* icon appeared in illuminated manuscripts, frescoes, mosaics, and seals of the time. The icon possesses emblematic verbal components: the Virgin as the Throne of Wisdom is a trope of Damiani or Guibert de Nogent, based on the typological interpretation of the passage in the Books of Kings that describes the throne of Solomon (I Kings 10: 18–20, repeated at II Chronicles 9: 17–19). This motif was frequently used in Early Netherlandish painting in works like the Lucca Madonna by Jan van Eyck.

Romanesque Sculpture: Tomb of Rudolf of Swabia

The tomb of Rudolf of Swabia is a prime example of Romanesque sculpture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the expressive Romanesque artistry on the tomb of Rudolf of Swabia

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rudolf of Rheinfelden was the alternative king, or antiking, for the politically oriented anti-Henry German aristocrats. He died during the Great Saxon Rebellion in the late 11th century.
- Rudolf's tomb sculpture reflects the Romanesque love of inventive surface patterns and an expressive approach to the human body, using elongation, unnatural poses, and emphatic gestures to convey states of mind.

- The intricate metalwork on Rudolf's tomb is also indicative of Romanesque sculpture.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.

Rudolf of Rheinfelden (1025 – 1080) was Duke of Swabia (1057–1079) and German Antiking (1077–1080). He was the son of Count Kuno of Rheinfelden and eventually became the alternative king, or antiking, for the politically oriented anti-Henry German aristocrats. This rebellion became known as the Great Saxon Revolt. He died as a result of battle wounds as his faction met and defeated Henry's in the Battle of Elster.

Tomb of Rudolf of Rheinfelden

Rudolf of Rheinfelden's tomb, located at the cathedral of Merseburg, is a fine example of Romanesque sculpture. Sculpture of this era is marked by a love of inventive surface patterns and an expressive approach to the human body, using elongation, unnatural poses, and emphatic gestures to convey states of mind. Rudolf's tomb reflects these characteristics. The sculpture of his body is elongated and lies with a scepter in one hand and an orb in the other, symbolic of the royal title he claimed but never held in life. He is depicted in royal garments and a crown.

The material used to construct the tomb also reflects the high status of metalwork in Romanesque sculpture. Indeed, precious metal objects, enamel work, and ivory carried a much higher significance than paintings during this time. Metalwork and enamel decoration became especially sophisticated during the 10^{th} and 11^{th} centuries. Rudolf of Rheinfelden's tomb reflects this aesthetic with its bronze relief of Rudolf's body encased inside of a raised border edge. An inscription is also etched into the border, demonstrating the skill involved in the tomb's construction.

Tomb of Rudolf of Swabia: The tomb of Rudolf of Swabia is exemplary of Romanesque sculpture.

Romanesque Sculpture: Reiner of Huy

Reiner of Huy was a 12th century metalworker and sculptor to whom the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church is attributed.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Reiner of Huy's masterpiece, the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church in Belgium

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Reiner of Huy was a 12th century metalworker and sculptor thought to be the creator of the famous baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church.
- Nothing is known of Reiner's life other than that he was mentioned in an 1125 document as a goldsmith, but a 14th century chronicle mentions him as the artist of the font.
- Reiner of Huy's status as the creator of the font and the Mosan origin of the font have been questioned.
- The font is a major masterpiece of Mosan art, remarkable for the classicism of its style . The five scenes can be read in chronological sequence and include depictions of John the Baptist, the Baptism of Christ, St. Peter baptizing Cornelius the Centurion, and St. John baptizing Craton.
- The only other work generally agreed to be by the same master as the font is a small bronze crucifix figure now located in Schnütgen Museum, Cologne.

Key Terms

- **lost-wax casting**: The process by which a duplicate metal sculpture (often silver, gold, brass, or bronze) is cast from an original sculpture.
- **font**: A receptacle in a church for holy water, especially one used in baptism.
- **Mosan**: A regional style of art from the valley of the Meuse in present-day Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Although in a broader sense the term applies to art from this region from all periods, it generally refers to Romanesque art, with architecture, stone carving, metalwork, enameling, and manuscript illumination reaching its peak from the 11th through 13th centuries.

Overview: Reiner of Huy

Reiner of Huy was a 12th century metalworker and sculptor to whom many masterpieces of Mosan art, including the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church in Liege, Belgium, are attributed. The Meuse River valley in modern Belgium and France, roughly comprising the Diocese of Liège, was the leading 12th century center of Romanesque metalwork , which at the time was still the most prestigious art medium . Nothing is known of Rainer's life other a mention in an 1125 document as a goldsmith; however, a 14th century chronicle mentions him as the artist of the font. He may have died around 1150. Although Reiner of Huy is traditionally accepted to be the creator of the font, this attribution and the Mosan origin of the font, have been questioned.

Baptismal Font at St. Bartholomew's Church

The font is a major masterpiece of Mosan art, remarkable for the classicism of its style. The basin is 91 centimeters (36 inches) across at the top, tapering slightly toward the base , and described as brass or bronze. It was made using the lost-wax casting technique with the basin cast in a single piece. The size was not necessarily exceptional, as both church bells and cauldrons for large households were probably comparable sizes. Some church doors cast in a single piece, though flat, were much larger.

The font sat on 12 oxen (two of which are now missing) that emerged from a stone plinth, a reference to the "molten sea… on twelve oxen" cast in bronze for Solomon's temple. The five scenes shown, identified by Latin inscriptions (*tituli*) on the rim above and in the image field, can be read in chronological sequence. They include two scenes of John the Baptist, the Baptism of Christ, St. Peter baptizing Cornelius the Centurion, and St. John the Evangelist baptizing the philosopher Craton.

Baptismal Font at St. Bartholomew's Church: Reiner of Huy, a 12th century metalworker and sculptor, is generally attributed with creating the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church.

Possible Other Works

The only other work generally agreed to be by the same master as the font is a small bronze crucifix figure now located in Schnütgen Museum, Cologne. Another crucifix in Brussels is probably from the same mold but with extra chasing. Others in Brussels and Dublin may have come from the same workshop, as they have many similarities to the Cologne bronze crucifix.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Gloucester_candlestick.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art#/media/File:Gloucester_candlestick.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-02_Basilique_Ste-Marie-Madeleine_de_V%C3%A9zelay_-_Tympan.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art#/media/File:02_Basilique_Ste-Marie-Madeleine_de_V%C3%A9zelay_-_Tympan.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Romanesque Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Majestat Batllu00f3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Majestat_Batll%C3%B3.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Majestat Batllo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Majestat_Batllo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Majestat Batllo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Majestat_Batllo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconographic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconographic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- polychromy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/polychromy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- abacus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abacus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-StifteremailJMK.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Seat_of_Wisdom#/media/File:StifteremailJMK.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Presbyter Martinus Madonna als Sedes Sapientiae. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Presbyter_Martinus_Madonna_als_Sedes_Sapientiae.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hodegetria. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hodegetria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cross of Mathilde. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_of_Mathilde. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Throne of Wisdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne_of_Wisdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grabplatte Rudolf von Rheinfelden Detail. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grabplatte_Rudolf_von_Rheinfelden_Detail.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Rudolf of Rheinfelden. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_of_Rheinfelden. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renier de Huy MCL1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Renier_de_Huy_MCL1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Reiner of Huy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Reiner_of_Huy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baptismal font at St Bartholomew's Church, Liu00e8ge. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptismal_font_at_St_Bartholomew's_Church,_Li%C3%A8ge. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mosan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- font. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/font. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 17.3: Romanesque Sculpture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

17.4: Other Romanesque Arts

Romanesque Illustrated Books

Many books of worship produced during the Romanesque period were characterized by illuminated manuscript.

Learning Objectives

Identify the most well-known examples of illuminated bibles and psalters during the Romanesque period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- A number of regional schools of art converged during the early Romanesque period and influenced the production of illuminated manuscripts and illustrated books.
- The “Channel school” of England and Northern France was heavily influenced by late Anglo-Saxon art, whereas the style in southern France depended more on Iberian influence. In Germany and the Low Countries, Ottonian styles continued to develop; these styles, along with Byzantine schools, in turn influenced Italy.
- Romanesque illumination typically focused on the Bible, prefacing each book by a large historiated initial, and the Psalter , where major initials were similarly illuminated.
- St. Alban’s Psalter is widely considered one of the most important examples of English Romanesque art book production.
- Other notable books of worship that depict Romanesque art include the Fécamp Bible, Winchester Bible, and Hunterian Psalter.

Key Terms

- **psalter**: The Book of Psalms, often applied to a book containing the Psalms separately printed.
- **historiated**: Illuminated with decorative designs that represent parts of the following text.
- **illuminated manuscript**: A book in which the text is supplemented by decoration, such as initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.

Illuminated Manuscripts in the Romanesque Period

A number of regional schools of art converged during the early Romanesque period and influenced the production of illuminated manuscripts and illustrated books. The “Channel school” of England and Northern France was heavily influenced by late Anglo-Saxon art, whereas the style in southern France depended more on Iberian influence. In Germany and the Low Countries, Ottonian styles continued to develop; these styles, along with Byzantine schools, in turn influenced Italy. By the 12th century reciprocal influences had developed among all these schools, although a degree of regional distinctiveness remained.

Romanesque illumination and illustrated books focused on the Bible, with each book prefaced by a large historiated initial, and the Psalter, where major initials were similarly illuminated. In both cases, more lavish examples contained cycles of scenes in fully-illuminated pages, sometimes with several scenes per page. The Bibles in particular often featured large pages and might be bound into more than one volume . Well-known examples of manuscripts from this era include the St. Alban’s Psalter, Hunterian Psalter, Winchester Bible (the “Morgan Leaf”), Fécamp Bible, Stavelot Bible, and Parc Abbey Bible.

By the end of the period, commercial artist and scribe workshops were significant and illumination (and books in general) became more widely available to both lay people and clergy.

Well-Known Works of Art

St. Alban’s Psalter

St. Alban’s Psalter, also known as the Albani Psalter or the Psalter of Christina of Markyate, is an English illuminated manuscript and one of several psalters created at or for St Alban’s Abbey in the 12th century. It is widely considered one of the most important examples of English Romanesque book production, featuring unprecedented lavishness of decoration, with over 40 full-page miniatures and contains a number of iconographic innovations that endured throughout the Middle Ages .

St. Alban's Psalter: A scene depicting Mary Magdalene announcing news of the risen Christ. St. Alban's Psalter is widely considered one of the most important examples of English Romanesque book production.

Hunterian Psalter

Also known as the York Psalter, the Hunterian Psalter is an illuminated manuscript produced in England around 1170 and considered a striking example of the Romanesque style. The book opens with an illustrated calendar, and each month begins with the historiated letters "KL", an abbreviation for kalenda (i.e. the first day of the month). Next is 13 pages of prefactory full-page miniatures with two scenes to a page: three pages of Old Testament scenes, six pages of scenes from the Life of Christ (though further pages are perhaps missing), and unusually for this date, three pages from the Life of the Virgin, including a Death of the Virgin with a funeral procession and an Assumption.

Hunterian Psalter: Depiction of the astrological sign Gemini, featuring the twins Castor and Pollux. The Hunterian Psalter was produced in England around 1170 and is considered a striking example of this Romanesque style.

These are the earliest English miniatures to have gold-leaf backgrounds incised with patterns of lines and dots. After these pages come two full-page miniatures of David playing his harp and a “Beatus” initial for the start of Psalm 1 (“Beatus vir”). All the psalms have a large illuminated initial, often historiated, and each verse starts with an enlarged gold initial. The start of the 10 traditional divisions of the text have especially large initials, typical for this style.

Winchester Bible

The Winchester Bible is a Romanesque illuminated manuscript produced in Winchester between 1160 and 1175. With folios measuring 583 x 396 mm (23 x 16 inches), it is the largest surviving 12th-century English Bible.

Winchester Bible: A scene depicting God addressing Jeremiah. During the Romanesque period, the focus of major illumination in the West moved from the Gospel Book to the Psalter and the Bible, and the Winchester manuscript is one of the most lavish examples.

During the Romanesque period, the focus of major illumination in the West moved from the Gospel Book to the Psalter and the Bible, and the Winchester manuscript is one of the most lavish examples. The artwork is incomplete; many illuminations were left unfinished and others were deliberately removed. The illuminations appear in varying stages of completion, ranging from rough outlines and inked drawings to unpainted gilded images and figures complete in all but the final details. In all, 48 of the major historiated initials that begin each book stand complete.

Fécamp Bible

The Fécamp Bible is an illuminated Latin Bible produced in Paris during the third quarter of the 13th century. Each book of the Bible and the major sections of Psalms are introduced by a large historiated initial in colors and gold, with the exception of the books of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Haggai. In all, there are 79 extant historiated initials. The beginnings of the prologues have large zoomorphic and foliate initials. The beginning of each chapter is marked by a small initial in red with blue-pen flourishes or in blue with red-pen flourishes.

A page from the Fécamp Bible: The Fécamp Bible is an illuminated Latin Bible produced in Paris during the late 13th century. This page showcases the striking blue and red flourishes.

Romanesque Painting and Stained Glass

Painting from the Romanesque era consisted of elaborate mural decorations and exquisite stained glass.

Learning Objectives

Give examples of Romanesque painting and art in France and Spain

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Romanesque painting was greatly influenced by Byzantine art and by the anti-classical energy of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements forged a highly innovative and coherent style in painting and stained glass.
- The large wall surfaces and plain, curving vaults of Romanesque architecture lent themselves to elaborate wall paintings and mural decoration.
- One of the most intact painting schemes still in existence is at the Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe in France, where the long barrel vault of the nave is decorated with scenes of the Old Testament.

- The oldest-known fragments of medieval pictorial stained glass appear to date from the 10th century; the figures, though stiff and formalized, demonstrate considerable proficiency in design, indicating that their maker was well-accustomed to the medium .
- Glass craftsmen were slower than architects to change their style, so much glasswork from the first part of the 13th century can be considered essentially Romanesque.
- Large figures from the Strasbourg Cathedral created in about 1200 are of especially fine quality. Other exceptional stained glass examples can be found at Saint Kunibert's Church in Cologne, made around 1220.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque art**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **iconoclasm**: The destruction of religious icons and other images or monuments for religious or political motives.

Romanesque painting and other art forms were greatly influenced by Byzantine art and the anti-classical energy of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements was forged a highly innovative and coherent style in illumination, painting, and stained glass.

Wall Paintings

The large wall surfaces and plain, curving vaults of the architecture of the Romanesque period lent themselves to elaborate wall paintings and mural decorations. Unfortunately, many of these early wall paintings have been destroyed by dampness, and in some cases the walls have been replastered and painted over. In England, France, and the Netherlands, such pictures were systematically destroyed or whitewashed in bouts of iconoclasm during the Reformation . In Denmark and elsewhere, many have since been restored. In Catalonia (Spain), there was a national campaign to save such murals in the early 20th century by transferring them to safekeeping in Barcelona, resulting in the spectacular collection at the National Art Museum of Catalonia. In other countries, Romanesque wall paintings have suffered from war, neglect, and changing fashion.

A classic scheme for the painted decoration of a church was derived from earlier examples, often in mosaic . At its focal point in the semi-dome of the apse , it commonly presented either Christ in Majesty or Christ the Redeemer enthroned within a mandorla and framed by the four winged beasts, symbols of the Four Evangelists. These iconographic images compared directly with examples from the gilt covers or illuminations of Gospel Books of the period. If the Virgin Mary was the patron saint of the church, she might replace Christ in the apse. On the apse walls below were saints and apostles, often including narrative scenes. On the sanctuary arch were figures of apostles, prophets, or the 24 elders of the Apocalypse, looking toward a bust of Christ or his symbol the Lamb at the top of the arch. The north wall of the nave often contained narrative scenes from the Old Testament while the south wall was dedicated to scenes from the New Testament. On the rear west wall was a Last Judgement with an enthroned and judging Christ at the top.

The Virgin and Child in Majesty and the Adoration of the Maji: Master of Pedret, The Virgin and Child in Majesty and the Adoration of the Magi, apse fresco, Spain, c. 1100, now The Cloisters.

One of the most intact schemes still in existence is at Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe in France. The long barrel vault of the nave provides an excellent surface for fresco and is decorated with scenes of the Old Testament, showing the Creation, the Fall of Man, and other stories. The paintings include a lively depiction of Noah's Ark, complete with a fearsome figurehead and numerous windows through which can be seen Noah and his family on the upper deck, birds on the middle deck, and pairs of animals on the lower deck. Another scene shows the swamping of Pharaoh's army by the Red Sea. The scheme extends to other parts of the church, with the martyrdom of the local saints shown in the crypt and the Apocalypse shown in the narthex . The range of colors is limited to light blue-green, yellow ochre , reddish brown, and black. Similar paintings exist in Serbia, Spain, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere in France.

San Isidoro at León, Spain: The painted crypt of San Isidoro at León, Spain

Stained Glass

The oldest-known fragments of medieval pictorial stained glass appear to date from the 10th century. The earliest intact figures include five prophet windows at Augsburg dating from the late 11th century. The figures, though stiff and formalized, demonstrate considerable proficiency in design, both pictorially and in the functional use of the glass, indicating that their maker was well-accustomed to the medium.

Glass craftsmen were slower than architects to change their style, so much glasswork from the first part of the 13th century is essentially Romanesque. Large figures from the Strasbourg Cathedral, created in about 1200, are of especially fine quality. Some of these have been removed to museums for protection and better viewing. Other exceptional stained glass examples can be found at Saint Kunibert's Church in Cologne, made around 1220. Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, including the famous "Tree of Jesse" window of Chartres Cathedral, dates from the 13th century. Glass was both expensive and fairly adaptable in that it could be added to or rearranged, and it was often reused when churches were rebuilt in the Gothic style.

Romanesque Stained Glass: Stained glass, the Prophet Daniel from Augsburg Cathedral, late 11th century.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- FecampBibleFol4vIinitialICreation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:FecampBibleFol4vIinitialICreation.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hunterian Psalter c. 1170 Gemini. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hunterian_Psalter_c._1170_Gemini.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- WinchesterBibleJeremiah(cover). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:WinchesterBibleJeremiah(cover).GIF. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Maria Magdalena berichtet den Ju00fcngern. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maria_Magdalena_berichtet_den_J%C3%BCngern.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hunterian Psalter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunterian_Psalter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- St.nAlbans Psalter. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Albans_Psalter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art%23Manuscript_illumination. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fu00e9camp Bible. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9camp_Bible. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Winchester Bible. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Winchester_Bible. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- illuminated manuscript. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/illuminated%20manuscript. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- historiated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/historiated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- psalter. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/psalter. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Su00fcddeutscher Glasmaler 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:S%C3%BCddeutscher_Glasmaler_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pante%C3%B3nSanIsidoroLe%C3%B3n.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art#/media/File:Pante%C3%B3nSanIsidoroLe%C3%B3n.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'The Virgin and Child in Majesty and the Adoration of the Maji', Romanesque fresco by the Master of Pedret from the apse of the Church of Saint Joan at Tredos, Lleida, Spain, c. 1100. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:'The_Virgin_and_Child_in_Majesty_and_the_Adoration_of_the_Maji',_Romanesque_fresco_by_the_Master_of_Pedret_from_the_apse_of_the_Church_of_Saint_Joan_at_Tredos,_Lleida,_Spain,_c._1100.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconoclasm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_painting%23Metal-.2C_enamel-.2C_and_ivorywork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_painting%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 17.4: Other Romanesque Arts is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

17.5: Normandy and England

Norman Architecture

Norman architecture is a style of Romanesque architecture developed by the Normans in lands under their dominion during the 11th and 12th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of Normandy and Norman architecture in France and England

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural, and military impact on medieval Europe. Romanesque styles originated in Normandy and became widespread in northwestern Europe, particularly in England.
- The Normans were among the most traveled peoples of Europe and were thus exposed to a wide variety of cultural influences, including those from the Near East, which were incorporated in their art and architecture.
- They elaborated on the Early Christian basilica plan, making it longitudinal with side aisles, an apse , and a western facade with two towers.
- The Church of Saint-Pierre in Normandy is a prime example of Norman architecture.
- England was influential in the development of Norman architecture and has the largest number of surviving examples.

Key Terms

- **keeps**: Towers in a castle.
- **motte**: An earthen mound forming the site of a castle, camp, or fortification; often accompanied by an enclosed courtyard, or bailey, surrounded by a protective ditch and palisade.
- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.

Norman architecture is a style of Romanesque architecture developed by the Normans in the lands under their dominion during the 11^{th} and 12^{th} centuries. The Normans were descended from Norse raiders and pirates from Denmark, Iceland, and Norway, who in the 10th and 11th centuries gave their name to Normandy, a region in France. The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural, and military impact on medieval Europe. In particular, the term “Norman architecture” is traditionally used to refer to English Romanesque architecture. The Normans introduced large numbers of castles and fortifications, including keeps , monasteries, abbeys , churches, and cathedrals . These structures were constructed in a style characterized by Romanesque rounded arches (particularly over windows and doorways) and massive proportions compared to other regional variations of the style.

Origins

Romanesque styles originated in Normandy and became widespread in northwestern Europe, particularly in England. Indeed, England was influential in the development of Romanesque architecture and has the largest number of surviving examples. At roughly the same time, the Norman dynasty ruled in Sicily, producing a distinctive variation that incorporated Byzantine and Saracen influence. This style of Norman architecture is known alternatively as Sicilian Romanesque.

Characteristics and Examples

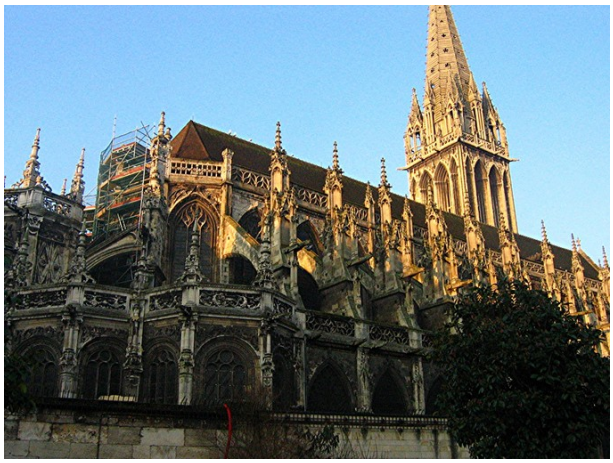
Architecture in Normandy

Norman invaders arrived at the mouth of the river Seine in 911. Over the next century, Norman barons built timber castles on earthen mounds, beginning the development of motte -and-bailey castles; they also produced great stone churches in the Romanesque style of the Franks. By 950 they were building stone keeps. The Normans were among the most traveled peoples of Europe and thus exposed to a wide variety of cultural influences, including those from the Near East, some of which were incorporated into their art and architecture. They elaborated on the Early Christian basilica plan, making it longitudinal with side

aisles, an apse, and a western facade with two towers. This elaboration can be seen in the Abbey of Saint-Étienne at Caen, begun in 1063, which formed a model for the larger English cathedrals whose construction began twenty years later.

The Abbey of Saint-Étienne : The Abbey of Saint-Étienne is a former Benedictine monastery in the French city of Caen, Normandy, dedicated to Saint Stephen. It was founded in 1063 by William the Conqueror and is one of the most important Romanesque buildings in Normandy.

The Church of Saint-Pierre is another prime example of Norman architecture. This Roman Catholic church dedicated to Saint Peter is situated on the Place Saint Pierre in the center of Caen in Normandy. The construction of the present building took place between the early 13th and 16th centuries. The spire was destroyed in 1944 and has since been rebuilt. The eastern apse of the church was built by Hector Sohier between 1518 and 1545. The interior choir and the exterior apse display an architecture that embodies the transition from Gothic to Renaissance . Balustrades of Gothic letters, which read as part of the *Magnificat*, run along the top. Its west portal , the decoration of the tower spire, and the stained glass are among the features which make it one of the finest churches of the Rouen diocese.



Church of St. Pierre: The Church of St. Pierre is a good example of Norman architecture.

Norman Architecture in England

In England, Norman nobles and bishops had influence even before the Norman Conquest of 1066, and Norman influences affected late Anglo-Saxon architecture. Edward the Confessor was raised in Normandy, and in 1042 he brought masons to work on Westminster Abbey, the first Romanesque building in England. In 1051 he brought in Norman knights who built motte (raised earthwork) castles as a defense against the Welsh. Following the Norman invasion of England, Normans rapidly constructed more motte-and-bailey castles, and in a burst of building activity constructed churches, abbeys, and more elaborate fortifications such as Norman stone keeps.

The buildings show massive proportions in simple geometries. The masonry is decorated only with small bands of sculpture, perhaps used as blind arcading. Restrained decoration is seen in concentrated spaces of capitals and round doorways and in the tympanum under an arch. The Norman arch is round, in contrast to the pointed Gothic arch. Norman moldings are carved or incised

with geometric ornament , such as chevron patterns (frequently termed “zig-zag moldings”) around arches. The cruciform churches often have deep chancels and a square crossing tower, which has remained a feature of English ecclesiastical architecture. Hundreds of parish churches were built, and the great English cathedrals were founded during a period from about 1083.

Guiting Power, Gloucestershire: A Norman arch with zig-zag mouldings above the church doorway at Guiting Power, Gloucestershire.

After a fire damaged Canterbury Cathedral in 1174, Norman masons introduced the new Gothic architecture . Around 1191, Wells Cathedral and Lincoln Cathedral brought in the English Gothic style, and Norman architecture became an increasingly modest style seen only in provincial buildings.

Norman Painting

Norman painting, like other Romanesque painting of its time, is best demonstrated by illuminated manuscripts, wall paintings, and stained glass.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the illuminated manuscripts and wall paintings in Normandy and England during the Romanesque period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural, and military impact on medieval Europe, spreading from France south to Italy and north into England after the Norman invasion of England in 1066.
- In the visual arts, the Normans did not have the rich and distinctive traditions of the cultures they conquered. However, in the early 11th century, the dukes began a program of church reform and encouraged the patronizing of artistic and intellectual pursuits.
- The chief monasteries taking part in this “renaissance” of Norman art and scholarship helped facilitate a brief golden age of illustrated manuscripts from roughly 1090-1110.
- Wall paintings were a significant form of Norman art in Normandy and England, though few exist today.
- Another significant Norman art form is stained glass; most of the magnificent stained glass of France, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century.
- Norman Romanesque embroidery is best known from the Bayeux Tapestry , an embroidered cloth nearly 70 meters (230 feet) long which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England.

Key Terms

- **iconoclasm**: The belief in, participation in, or sanction of the destruction of religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.
- **quatrefoil**: A symmetrical shape which forms the overall outline of four partially overlapping circles of the same diameter.
- **historiated**: Illuminated with decorative designs that represent parts of the following text.

Background: The Normans

The Normans descended from Norse raiders from Denmark, Iceland, and Norway who in the 10th and 11th centuries gave their name to Normandy, a region in northern France. The distinct cultural and ethnic identity of the Normans emerged in the first half of the 10th century and continued to evolve over the succeeding centuries. The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural and military impact on medieval Europe. Norman cultural and military influence spread from France south to Italy and north into England after the Norman invasion of England in 1066.

Manuscript Illumination

In the visual arts, the Normans did not have the rich and distinctive traditions of the cultures they conquered. However, in the early 11th century, the dukes began a program of church reform, encouraging the Cluniac reform of monasteries and patronizing intellectual pursuits, especially the proliferation of scriptoria and the compilation of lost illuminated manuscripts . The chief monasteries taking part in this “renaissance” of Norman art and scholarship were Mont-Saint-Michel, Fécamp, Jumièges, Bec, Saint-Ouen, Saint-Evroul, and Saint-Wandrille. These centers were in contact with the Winchester school, which channeled a pure Carolingian artistic tradition to Normandy. From roughly 1090-1110, Normandy experienced a brief golden age of illustrated manuscripts; however, the major scriptoria of Normandy ceased to function after the midpoint of the 12th century.

An illuminated manuscript is a manuscript in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations. Romanesque illuminations focused on the Bible and the Psalter . Each book of the Bible was prefaced by a large historiated initial; major initials were similarly illuminated in the Psalter. In both cases, more lavish examples had cycles of scenes in fully illuminated pages, sometimes with several scenes per page in compartments. The Bibles, in particular, often had very large pages and were sometimes bound into more than one volume .

Illuminated Manuscript, The Three Magi from the St. Albans Psalter, Norman English, 12th century.: The typical foci of Romanesque illumination, such as this one pictured, were the Bible and the Psalter.

Wall Painting

The large wall surfaces and plain, curving vaults of the Romanesque period lent themselves well to mural decoration in Normandy and other Norman lands. Unfortunately, many of these early wall paintings have been destroyed by dampness over the years, or the walls themselves have been re-plastered and painted over. In Normandy, such pictures were systematically destroyed or whitewashed in bouts of iconoclasm during the Reformation .

A classic scheme for the painted decoration of a church had, as its focal point in the semi-dome of the apse , Christ in Majesty or Christ the Redeemer enthroned within a mandorla and framed by the four winged beasts (symbols of the Four Evangelists). If the Virgin Mary was the dedicatee of the church, she might replace Christ here. On the apse walls below were saints and apostles, often including narrative scenes. On the sanctuary arch were figures of apostles, prophets, or the 24 “elders of the Apocalypse”, looking in towards a bust of Christ or his symbol, the Lamb, at the top of the arch. The north wall of the nave contained narrative scenes from the Old Testament, while the south wall contained scenes from the New Testament. On the rear west wall was a Last Judgment with an enthroned and judging Christ at the top.

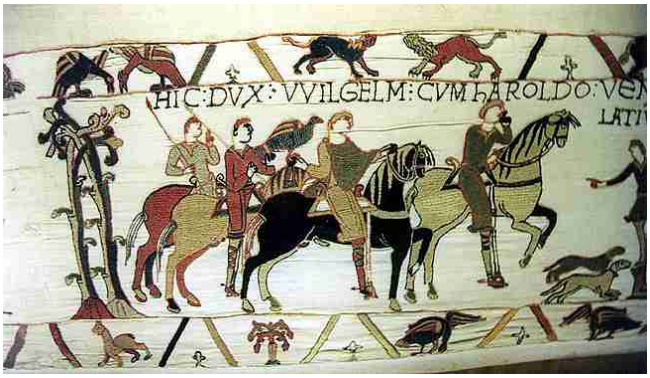
One of the most intact schemes in existence is at Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe in France. The long barrel vault of the nave provides an excellent surface for fresco and is decorated with scenes of the Old Testament. One of these shows a lively depiction of Noah’s Ark, complete with a fearsome figurehead and numerous windows through which Noah and his family can be seen on the upper deck, birds on the middle deck, and pairs of animals on the lower deck. Another scene shows the swamping of Pharaoh’s army by the Red Sea. The scene extends to other parts of the church, with the martyrdom of the local saints shown in the crypt, the Apocalypse in the narthex , and Christ in Majesty. The range of colors is limited to light blue-green, yellow ochre , reddish brown, and black.

Stained Glass

Another significant Norman art form is stained glass. Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century. Few large windows remain intact from the 12th century. One is the Crucifixion of Poitiers, a remarkable composition which rises through three stages: the lowest a quatrefoil depicting the Martyrdom of St Peter, the largest central stage dominated by the crucifixion, and the upper stage depicting the Ascension of Christ in a mandorla. The figure of the crucified Christ already shows hints of the Gothic curve. Many detached fragments of these windows are in museums, and a window at Twycross Church in England is made up of important French panels rescued from the French Revolution . Glass was both expensive and fairly flexible in that era (in that it could be added to or rearranged) and was often reused when churches were rebuilt in the Gothic style .

Other Visual Arts

Many works of art have survived from this time period, mostly as church vestments . Norman Romanesque embroidery is best known from the Bayeux Tapestry, an embroidered cloth nearly 70 meters (230 feet) long that depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England. Images in the cloth include depictions of William, Duke of Normandy, the coronation and death of the English King Harold, the Battle of Hastings, and even Halley’s Comet.



Bayeux Tapestry: The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—that depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England concerning William, Duke of Normandy and Harold, Earl of Wessex, later King of England, and culminating in the Battle of Hastings.

Norman Stained Glass

Stained glass was a significant art form from the Norman empire throughout both France and Norman-controlled England.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Norman stained glass

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- At Le Mans, Saint-Denis, and Chartres Cathedrals in France as well as Canterbury Cathedral in England, a number of panels of the 12th century Norman empire have survived.
- Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, however, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century. Far fewer large windows remain intact from the 12th century.
- Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Chartres Cathedral is the extent to which architectural structure has been adapted to meet the needs of stained glass.
- At Chartres, nearly all 176 windows were filled with equally dense stained glass, creating a relatively dark but richly colored interior in which the light filtering through the myriad narrative and symbolic windows was the main source of illumination.
- Though the architecture of Le Mans Cathedral features many French Gothic elements, it is notable for its rich collection of Romanesque stained glass.

Key Terms

- **lancet**: In architecture, a narrow, tall opening with a pointed arch.

Stained glass was a significant art form from the Norman empire throughout both France and Norman-controlled England. At Le Mans, Saint-Denis, and Chartres Cathedrals in France as well as Canterbury Cathedral in England, a number of panels of the 12th century have survived. Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, however, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century. Far fewer large windows remain intact from the 12th century.

Glass craftsmen were slower than architects to change their style , and much Norman stained glass from the first part of the 13th century can be considered Romanesque. Especially fine are large figures from around the year 1200 from Strasbourg Cathedral and Saint Kunibert's Church in Cologne, both in France. Glass was both expensive and fairly flexible (in that it could be added to or rearranged) and was often reused when churches were rebuilt in the Gothic style.

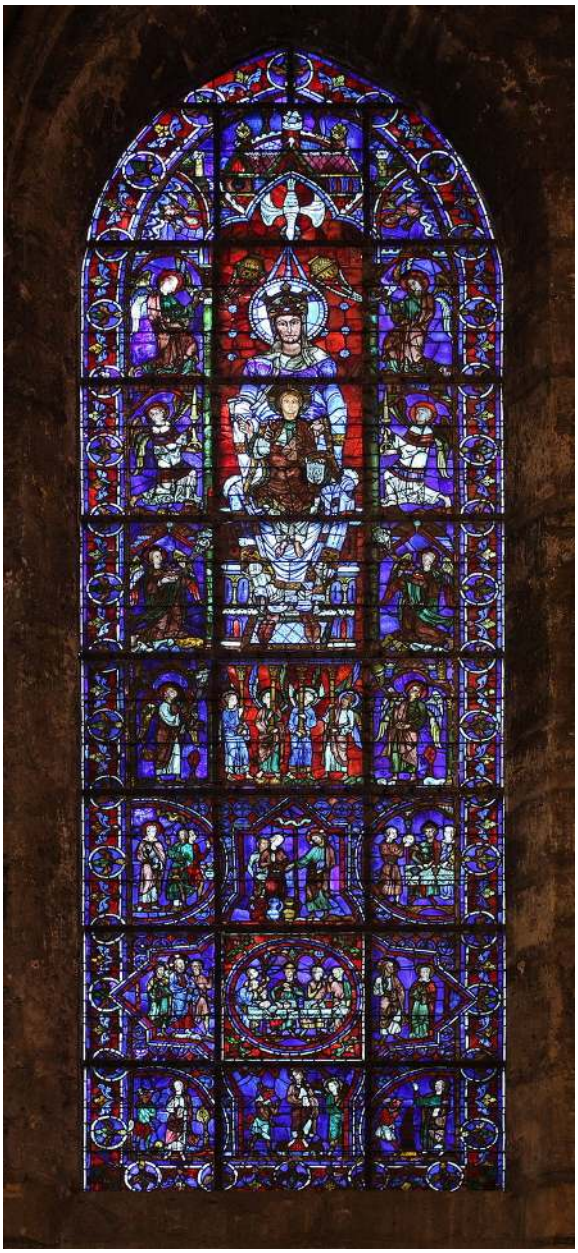
Famous Examples

Chartres Cathedral

Chartres Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres, is a medieval Catholic cathedral of the Latin Church located in Chartres, France. The current cathedral was mostly constructed between 1194 and 1250. The cathedral is in an exceptional state of preservation , and the majority of the original stained glass windows survive intact. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Chartres Cathedral is the extent to which its architectural structure has been adapted to meet the needs of stained glass. The use of three-part elevation with external buttressing allowed for far larger windows than did earlier designs, particularly at the clerestory level. Most cathedrals of the period had a mixture of windows containing plain or grisaille glass and windows containing dense stained glass panels; the brightness of the former tended to diminish the impact and legibility of the latter. At Chartres, nearly all 176 windows were filled with equally dense stained glass, creating a relatively dark but richly colored interior in which the light filtering through the myriad narrative and symbolic windows was the main source of illumination.

The majority of the windows now visible at Chartres were made and installed between 1205 and 1240; however, four lancets preserve panels of Romanesque glass from the 12th century that survived the fire of 1195. Perhaps the most famous 12th-century window at Chartres is the so-called *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière*, found in the first bay of the choir after the south transept . This window is actually a composite; the upper part, showing the Virgin and child surrounded by adoring angels, dates from around 1180 and was probably positioned at the center of the apse in the earlier building. The Virgin is depicted wearing a blue robe and

sitting in a frontal pose on a throne, with the Christ Child seated on her lap raising his hand in blessing. This composition , known as the Sedes sapientia (“Throne of Wisdom”), is based on the famous cult figure kept in the crypt . The lower part of the window showing scenes from the Infancy of Christ dates from the main glazing campaign around 1225.

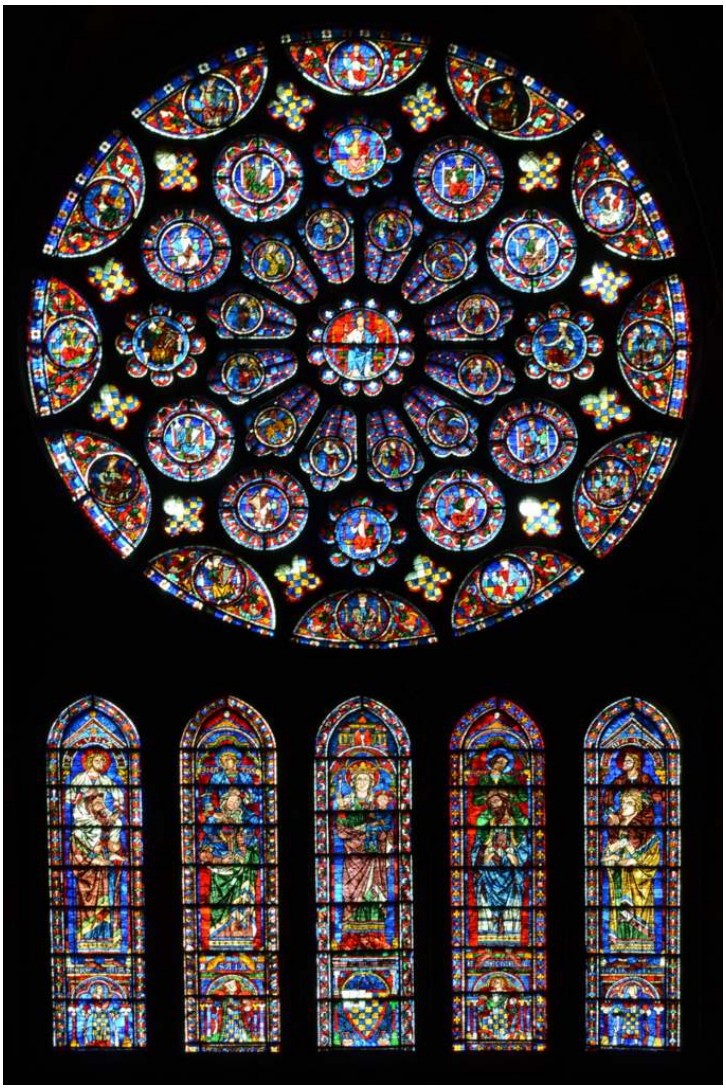


Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière, Chartres Cathedral, France (c.1180 and 1225) : *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière* is perhaps the most famous window in Chartres, depicting the Virgin Mary as the throne of wisdom.

Each bay of the aisles and the choir ambulatory contains a large lancet window roughly 8.1 meters high by 2.2 meters wide. The windows were made between 1205 and 1235 and depict stories from the Old and New Testament and the Lives of the Saints as well as typological cycles and symbolic images such as the signs of the zodiac and labors of the months. Most windows are made up of 25–30 individual panels showing distinct episodes within the narrative; only *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière* includes a larger image made up of multiple panels.

Because of their greater distance from the viewer , the windows in the clerestory generally adopt simpler, bolder designs. Most feature the standing figure of a saint or Apostle in the upper two-thirds, often with one or two simplified narrative scenes in the lower part. Unlike the lower windows in the nave arcades and the ambulatory that consist of one simple lancet per bay, the clerestory windows are each made up of a pair of lancets with a plate-traceried rose window above. The nave and transept

clerestory windows mainly depict saints and Old Testament prophets. Those in the choir depict the kings of France and Castille and members of the local nobility in the straight bays, while the windows in the apse hemicycle show those Old Testament prophets who foresaw the virgin birth, flanking scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation, and Nativity in the axial window. The cathedral also has three large rose windows: the western rose, the north transept rose, and the south transept rose.



South transept rose window, c.1221-30: The Cathedral at Chartres contains three rose windows from the 13th century, including this south transept rose window.

Le Mans Cathedral

Le Mans Cathedral is a Catholic cathedral situated in Le Mans, France. Its construction dated from the 6th through the 14th century, and though the cathedral itself features many French Gothic elements, it has a notable collection of Romanesque stained glass.

The nave at Le Mans retains around 20 stained glass windows from Bishop Guillaume's mid-12th century rebuilding, though all but one have been moved from their original locations. All were extensively restored in the 19th century. The great western window, depicting scenes from the Life of St Julian of Le Mans, dates from around 1155. The Ascension window toward the western end of the south aisle of the nave has been dated to 1120, making it one of the oldest extant stained glass windows in France.

Unlike the earlier Romanesque windows, the 13th-century glazing program in the upper parts of the choir is largely intact. It presents a diverse range of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the Lives of Saints, and various miracles of the Virgin. These windows are notable for their variety of artistic styles and their lack of coherent program (there is no obvious pattern in the

distribution of subjects, and some episodes, such as the story of Theophilus or the miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges, are repeated in different windows). The windows in the radiating chapels have fared less well over time, and most of the surviving panels have been reassembled out of context in the axial chapel.

Le Mans Cathedral: View of the north elevation of the choir from the south aisle, showing the triforium and clerestory windows.

Other Notable Examples

The Basilica of Saint Denis (also known as Basilique Saint-Denis) is a large medieval abbey church in the city of Saint-Denis, now a northern suburb of Paris. The basilica retains stained glass of many periods, most notably from the Romanesque era.

At Canterbury Cathedral in England, Norman stained glass images include a figure of Adam digging and another of his son Seth from a series of Ancestors of Christ. Adam represents a naturalistic and lively portrayal, while in the figure of Seth, the robes have been used to great decorative effect, similar to the best stone carving of the period.

The Crucifixion of Poitiers is a stained glass image dating from the 12th century in a Roman Catholic cathedral in Poitiers, France. This remarkable composition rises through three stages: the lowest stage contains a quatrefoil depicting the Martyrdom of St. Peter; the largest central stage is dominated by the crucifixion of St. Peter; and the upper stage shows the Ascension of Christ in a mandorla . The figure of the crucified Christ already shows hints of the Gothic curve.

The Bayeux Tapestry

The nearly 230-foot long Bayeux tapestry is the best-known example of Romanesque embroidery.

Learning Objectives

Explain the importance of the Bayeux tapestry

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Bayeux tapestry depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England, including scenes of William, Duke of Normandy; the coronation and death of the English King Harold; the Battle of Hastings; and even Halley’s Comet.
- The tapestry was likely commissioned by Bishop Odo, the half-brother to Duke William of Normandy, and made in England—not Bayeux—in the 1070s.
- The designs on the Bayeux tapestry are embroidered rather than woven, which means it’s not technically a tapestry.
- The tapestry is the final and best known work of Anglo-Saxon art. Though it was made after the Norman Conquest of England, historians accept that it was created in an Anglo-Saxon tradition.
- The tapestry’s central zone contains most of the action; events take place in a long series of scenes separated by highly stylized trees and surrounded by a decorative border.

Key Terms

- **tituli**: The labels or captions naming figures or subjects in art, commonly added in classical and medieval art and still conventional in Eastern Orthodox icons.

Overview and History

The Bayeux tapestry is the best-known example of Romanesque architecture. This embroidered cloth is nearly 70 meters (230 feet) long and 50 centimeters (20 inches) tall and depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England. Images in the cloth include depictions of William, Duke of Normandy; the coronation and death of the English King Harold; the Battle of Hastings; and even Halley's Comet.

The tapestry consists of some 50 scenes with Latin tituli , or inscriptions, embroidered on linen with colored woolen yarns. It was likely commissioned by Bishop Odo, the half-brother to Duke William of Normandy, and made in England—not Bayeux—in the 1070s. The hanging was rediscovered in 1729 by scholars at a time when it was being displayed annually in Bayeux Cathedral . The tapestry is now exhibited at the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux in Bayeux, Normandy, France.

Design

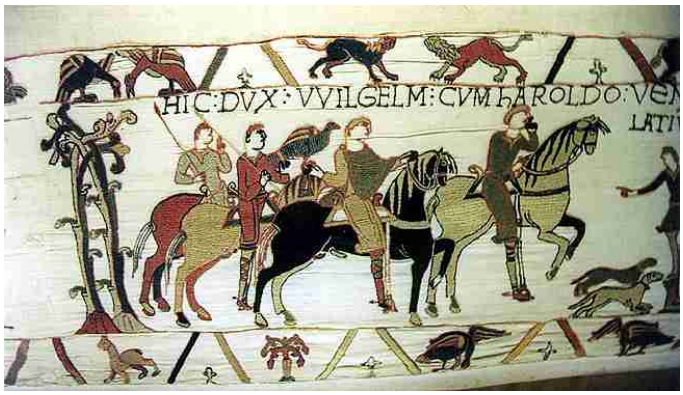
The designs on the Bayeux tapestry are embroidered rather than woven, so it's not technically considered a tapestry. The tapestry can be seen as the final and best known work of Anglo-Saxon art, and though it was made after the Norman Conquest of England, historians accept that it was created firmly in Anglo-Saxon tradition. Such tapestries adorned both churches and wealthy houses in England, though the Bayeux tapestry is exceptionally large.

The tapestry is embroidered in crewel (wool yarn) on a tabby-woven linen ground using two methods of stitching: outline or stem stitch for lettering and the outlines of figures and couching or laid work for figure interior. Nine linen panels between 14 and 3 meters in length were embroidered and sewn together, and the joins disguised with subsequent embroidery. The design involves a broad central zone with narrow decorative borders top and bottom. Later generations patched the hanging in numerous places, and some of the embroidery (especially in the final scene) has been reworked.

Bayeux tapestry: Detail of stem stitching and laid work.

The main yarn colors are terracotta or russet, blue-green, dull gold, olive green, and blue, with small amounts of dark blue, black, and sage green. Later repairs are worked in light yellow, orange, and light greens. The tapestry's central zone contains most of the action, which sometimes overflows into the borders either for dramatic effect or to allow extra space for depictions. Events are each depicted in a long series of scenes separated by stylized trees. The trees are not placed consistently, however, and the greatest scene shift (between Harold's audience with Edward after his return to England and Edward's burial scene) is not marked.

The tituli are normally located in the central zone but occasionally use the top border. The borders are otherwise decorated with birds, beasts, and fish, as well as scenes from fables, agriculture, and hunting. These don't necessarily complement the action in the central panels. The picture of Halley's Comet, which appears in the upper border (scene 32), is the first known depiction of this comet.



Bayeux Tapestry: The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—nearly 230 feet long, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England.

The Opus Anglicanum

Opus Anglicanum, Latin for "the English work," refers to the elaborate needlework produced in England during the Middle Ages.

Learning Objectives

Define the *Opus Anglicanum* and describe its motifs and uses

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- England gained a reputation for needlework as early as the pre-Norman conquest during the Anglo-Saxon period; however, it was in the 13th and 14th centuries that the *Opus Anglicanum* really flourished.
- Embroidered pieces were used in religious and secular settings on vestments , clothing for the wealthy, and heraldic tapestries .
- The work combined silk and gold or silver-gilt threads worked on linen and later velvet. The motifs followed the era's trends in other art forms , such as illuminated manuscripts and architecture.
- *Opus Anglicanum* consisted primarily of popular luxury that spread across Europe. However, as the 14th century progressed, demand for luxury goods decreased as funds were redirected towards military expenditures.
- Few pieces have survived due to the delicate nature of the work; some were re-purposed as they aged and others were even buried with their owners.

Key Terms

- **guild**: A group of tradespeople made up of merchants, craftspeople, or artisans, particularly in the Middle Ages.
- **vestments**: Liturgical garments and articles associated primarily with the Christian religion, especially among the Eastern Orthodox, Catholics (Latin Rite and others), Anglicans, and Lutherans.

Opus Anglicanum, Latin for "the English work," refers to the elaborate needlework produced in England during the the middle ages. Embroidered pieces were used in religious and secular settings on vestments, clothing for the wealthy, and heraldic tapestries. England gained a reputation for needlework as early as the Anglo-Saxon period prior to the Norman conquest; however, it was in the 13th and 14th centuries that the *Opus Anglicanum* really flourished.

Style

This work combined silk and gold or silver-gilt threads worked on linen and later velvet. The motifs used in needlework followed the trends in other art forms of the time, such as illuminated manuscripts and architecture; some motifs included the use of scrolls, spirals, and foliage. Embroidered pieces also depicted figures of kings and saints as well as the Gothic arches popular in European architecture.

Craftsmen

London was the primary center of production for *Opus Anglicanum*. While often associated with certain convents, a professional group of male craftsmen produced a great deal of the work. The Worshipful Company of Broderers was a craft guild incorporated in 1561 to represent these workers. There is some evidence that the group first incorporated as early as 1515, but those records were lost.

Use

Opus Anglicanum consisted primarily of popular luxury items that spread across Europe. Pope Martin IV, for example, ordered custom pieces after admiring the vestments of English Priests. As the 14th century progressed, however, demand for luxury goods decreased as funds were redirected toward military expenditures. As a result, the style of the work was scaled back, and much of the richness and storytelling of these pieces was lost. The needlework was relegated to small applique pieces that could be added to clothing or tapestries.

Few pieces have survived due to the delicate nature of the work. Some were repurposed as they aged and others were buried with their owners. One surviving piece is a cope, or a type of vestment, owned by the Butler-Bowdon family. Thought to have been made in 1330-1350, the Butler-Bowdon Cope is an example of a piece that was cut up for reuse, as it was reconstructed in the 19th century.

Butler-Bowden Cope: This picture is one of the few examples of Opus Anglicanum that has survived. It was reconstructed in the 19th century.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 1280px-Chevet_abbHommes.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chevet_abbHommes.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-Norman_arch.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Norman_arch.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Saint Pierre Caen chevet. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint_Pierre_Caen_chevet.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Normans. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Normans. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Church of Saint-Pierre, Caen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Saint-Pierre,_Caen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Norman architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Motte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Motte. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/keep. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Albanipsalter DreiKoenige. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Albanipsalter_DreiKoenige.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bayeux hawking. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bayeux_hawking.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Normans. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Normans. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bayeux Tapestry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeux_Tapestry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconoclasm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- historiated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/historiated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quatrefoil. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quatrefoil. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Chartres_-_cath%C3%A9drale_-_ND_de_la_belle_verri%C3%A8re.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres_Cathedral#/media/File:Chartres_-_cath%C3%A9drale_-_ND_de_la_belle_verri%C3%A8re.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cath%C3%A9draleLeMansVitrauxChoeurGothique1.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Mans_Cathedral#/media/File:Cath%C3%A9draleLeMansVitrauxChoeurGothique1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-The_south_transept_rose_at_Notre-Dame_de_Chartres.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres_Cathedral#/media/File:The_south_transept_rose_at_Notre-Dame_de_Chartres.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chartres Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_art#Stained_glass. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Le Mans Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Mans_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- bayeux-hawking.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bayeux_hawking.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bayeux_tapestry_laid_work_detail..jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeux_Tapestry#/media/File:Bayeux_tapestry_laid_work_detail..jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Titulus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Titulus_(inscription). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bayeux Tapestry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeux_Tapestry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Butlerbowden cope. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Butlerbowden_cope.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Opus Anglicanum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Opus_Anglicanum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- English embroidery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/English_embroidery%23Medieval_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Worshipful Company of Broderers. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Worshipful_Company_of_Broderers. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Butler-Bowden Cope. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Butler-Bowden_Cope. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vestments. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/vestments. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- guild. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/guild. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 17.5: Normandy and England is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

18: Gothic Art

18.1: Introduction to Gothic Art
18.2: Gothic Architecture
18.3: Gothic Sculpture
18.4: Gothic Painting
18.5: Gothic Metalwork
18.6: Italy in the Gothic Period

This page titled 18: Gothic Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

18.1: Introduction to Gothic Art

Gothic Art

Gothic art developed after the Romanesque, in the 12th century. The style continued to be used well into the 16th century in some parts of Europe, while giving way to the Renaissance style earlier in some regions.

Learning Objective

Describe the economic and political reasons that led to the development of the Gothic style

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- An increased population of cities in France, as well as a strengthened French monarch, contributes to the development of the Gothic style.
- The most expressive medium for the Gothic style is architecture, specifically, Cathedrals.
- While the Gothic style was developed in Northern France, it spread throughout Europe where different regional styles were adopted.

Key Term

- **Book of Hours**: A common type of illuminated manuscript that was created for personal devotion and contained a collection of texts, prayers, and psalms.

Gothic art developed after the Romanesque, in the 12th century. The style continued to be used well into the 16th century in some parts of Europe, while giving way to the Renaissance style earlier in other regions. The style was developed in Northern France due to socioeconomic, political, and theological reasons.

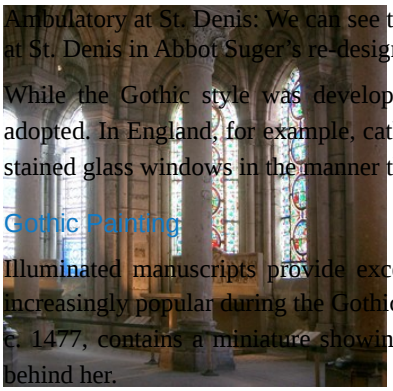
After the fall of the Roman Empire, people fled cities as they were no longer safe. The Romanesque era saw many people living in the countryside of France while cities remained largely abandoned. During this time period, the French monarchy was weak and feudal landowners exerted a large amount of
regional power. In the 12th century, the French royalty strengthened their power, their titles, and their landholdings, which led to more centralized government. Additionally, due to advancements in
agriculture, population and trade increased. These changes brought people back to the cities, which is where we find the most expressive medium for the Gothic style—cathedrals.

Gothic Architecture

Gothic architecture is unique in that we can pinpoint the exact place, the exact moment, and the exact person who developed it. Around 1137, Abbot Suger began re-building the Abbey Church of St. Denis. In his re-designs, which he wrote about extensively, we can see elements of what would become Gothic architecture, including the use of symmetry in design and ratios.

Ratios became essential to French Gothic cathedrals because they expressed the perfection of the universe created by God. This is where we also see stained glass emerge in Gothic architecture. Abbot Suger adopted the idea that light equates to God. He wrote that he placed pictures in the glass to replace wall paintings and talked about them as educational devices. The windows were instructional in theology during the Gothic era, and the light itself was a metaphor for the presence of God.

Cathedrals served as religious centers and they were important for local economies. Pilgrims would travel throughout Europe to see relics, which would bring an influx of travelers and money to cities with Cathedrals.



Ambulatory at St. Denis: We can see the Gothic style emerge at St. Denis in Abbot Suger's re-designs.

While the Gothic style was developed in Northern France, it spread throughout Europe where different regional styles were adopted. In England, for example, cathedrals became longer than they were tall and architects in Italy typically did not incorporate stained glass windows in the manner that the French did.

Gothic Painting

Illuminated manuscripts provide excellent examples of Gothic painting. A prayer book, known as the book of hours, became increasingly popular during the Gothic age and was treated as a luxury item. The Hours of Mary of Burgundy, produced in Flanders c. 1477, contains a miniature showing Mary of Burgundy in devotion with a wonderful depiction of a French Gothic Cathedral behind her.

Miniature from The Hours of Mary of Burgundy: This piece contains a miniature showing Mary of Burgundy in devotion with a wonderful depiction of a French Gothic Cathedral behind her.

Sculpture & Metalwork

Sculpture during the Gothic era really sheds light on the knowledge of artists working during this time period. Some historians believed that artists and artisans during the Gothic era had "forgotten" how to create realistic works of art, or art influenced by the classical age. However, a viewer only needs to look at the work of Nicolas of Verdun to see that artists could and did work in a classical style during the Gothic era. Additionally, sculpture produced in Germany during the Gothic era is especially noted for its lifelikeness.

Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral: The metalwork by Nicolas of Verdun demonstrates his knowledge and understanding of classical elements in art.

Gothic Cathedrals

French Gothic cathedrals are characterized by lighter construction, large windows, pointed arches, and their impressive height.

Learning Objective

Evaluate the structure and symbolism of the French Gothic cathedral

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- French Gothic cathedrals were characterized by lighter construction and large windows.
- The pointed arch was the defining architectural feature of Gothic construction.
- Height is enhanced by both the architectural features and the decoration of the building.
- All design elements of Gothic cathedrals are intended to pay homage to and bring attention to the Glory of God.
- The western entrance to the Cathedral is typically the primary point of entry and therefore the most elaborate facade.
- Stained glass adds a dimension of color to the light within the building, as well as providing a medium for figurative and narrative art.

Key Terms

- **Ogival**: Having the curved, pointed shape of a Gothic pointed arch, or a rib of a Gothic vault.
- **Lancet Arch**: A sharp pointed arch used in doors and windows, etc.
- **Gothic Architecture**: A style of architecture that flourished during the high and late medieval period; it evolved from Romanesque architecture and was succeeded by Renaissance architecture.
- **Jamb**: The vertical components that form the sides of a door frame, window frame, or fireplace, or other opening in a wall.
- **Blind Arcade**: A series of arches, often used in Romanesque and Gothic buildings, that has no actual openings and has no load-bearing function, and that is applied to the surface of a wall as a decorative element.
- **Nave**: The middle or body of a church, extending from the transepts to the principal entrances.

The Gothic cathedral represented the universe in microcosm, and each architectural concept, including the height and perfect ratios of the structure, were intended to convey a theological message: the great glory of God and his creation of a perfect universe. The building becomes a microcosm in two ways. First, the mathematical and geometrical nature of the construction is an image of the orderly universe, in which an underlying rationality and logic can be perceived. Second, the statues, sculptural decoration, stained glass, and murals incorporate the essence of creation in depictions of events from the Old and New Testaments.

Most Gothic churches have the Latin cross (or “cruciform”) plan, with a long nave making the body of the church. This nave is flanked on either side by aisles, a transverse arm called the transept, and, beyond it, an extension referred to as the choir.

One of the defining characteristics of Gothic architecture is the pointed or ogival arch. Arches of this type were used in the Near East in pre-Islamic as well as Islamic architecture before they were structurally employed in Gothic architecture. They are thought to have been the inspiration for their use in France at the Autun Cathedral, which is otherwise stylistically Romanesque. The way in which the pointed arch was drafted and utilized developed throughout the Gothic period, and four popular styles emerged: the Lancet arch, the Equilateral arch, the Flamboyant arch, and the Depressed arch.

Autun Cathedral, ca. 1120-46: Exterior of Autun Cathedral, showcasing the pointed arches of the Gothic style on an otherwise Romanesque building.

The Gothic vault, unlike the semi-circular vault of Roman and Romanesque buildings, can be used to roof rectangular and irregularly shaped plans such as trapezoids. This enabled architects to raise vaults much higher than was possible in Romanesque architecture. While the use of the pointed arch gave a greater flexibility to architectural form, it also gave Gothic architecture a very different and more vertical visual characteristic than Romanesque architecture.

In Gothic architecture the pointed arch is used in every location where a vaulted shape is called for, both structurally and decoratively. Gothic openings such as doorways, windows, arcades, and galleries have pointed arches. Rows of pointed arches upon delicate shafts form a typical wall decoration known as a blind arcade. Niches with pointed arches that contain statuary are a major external feature. The pointed arch lent itself to elaborate intersecting shapes, which developed complex Gothic tracery within window spaces and formed the structural support of the large windows that are characteristic of the style.

Cross-ribbed vault, Bonne-Espérance Abbey, Vellereille-les-Brayeux, Belgium, ca, 13th century: Ogival, or pointed arches, increased in popularity in the Gothic period.

The façade of a large church or cathedral, often referred to as the West Front, is generally designed to create a powerful impression on the approaching worshiper. In the arch of the door (the tympanum) is often a significant sculpture representing scenes from

Christian Theology, most frequently *Christ in Majesty and Judgment Day*. If there is a central door jamb or a tremeau, then it frequently bears a statue of the *Madonna and Child.*

The West Front of a French cathedral, along with many English, Spanish, and German cathedrals, generally has two towers, which, particularly in France, express an enormous diversity of form and decoration. A characteristic of French Gothic church architecture is its height, both absolute and in proportion to its width, the verticality suggests an aspiration to Heaven. As the Gothic Age progressed in France, the different towns and cities may have been in competition with one another to create the tallest Cathedral. Architects also closely guarded the ratios they used in their architectural plans.

Interior of Cologne Cathedral: The verticality demonstrated in this image is a definitive feature of Gothic architecture.

Another one of the most distinctive characteristics of Gothic architecture is the expansive area of windows and the large size of the many individual windows. The increase in the use of large windows during the Gothic period is directly related to the use of the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, and the flying buttress. All of these architectural features absorbed the weight of the structure, which had rested on the walls in Romanesque architecture. Since the walls had less weight to support, thanks to these innovations, architects were able to pierce the walls of the structures with windows without risking the structural soundness of the cathedral.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Shrine of the Three Kings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrine_of_the_Three_Kings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Book of Hours. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_hours. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gothic Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Hours of Mary of Burgundy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hours_of_Mary_of_Burgundy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- StDenis_Chorumgang.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Suger. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Stundenbuch_der_Maria_von_Burgund_Wien_cod._1857_14v.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hours_of_Mary_of_Burgundy. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cologne_Cathedral_Shrine_of_Magi.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_of_Verdun. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- blind arcade. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/blind%20arcade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gothic Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/gothic%20architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- jamb. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/jamb. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- nave. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nave. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lancet arch. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lancet_arch. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Autun cathedrale. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Autun_cathedrale.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Bonne-Esperance Salle capitulaire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bonne-Esperance_Salle_capitulaire.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Koelner Dom Innenraum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Koelner_Dom_Innenraum.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 18.1: Introduction to Gothic Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

18.2: Gothic Architecture

Gothic Architecture: The Abbey Church of Saint Denis

The Abbey Church of Saint Denis is known as the first Gothic structure and was developed in the 12th century by Abbot Suger.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate a timeline of the creation of the Abbey Church of Saint Denis

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Abbey Church of Saint Denis provided an architectural model for cathedrals and abbeys of northern France, England, and other European countries.
- In the 12th century, Abbot Suger rebuilt portions of the church using innovative structural and decorative features that were drawn from a number of sources, resulting in the first truly Gothic building.
- The two architects who worked under Abbot Suger's direction remain uncredited, identified only by their unique stylistic contributions.

Key Terms

- **Abbey Church of Saint Denis**: The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Denis is a large medieval abbey church in the commune of Saint Denis, renowned for its Gothic architecture.
- **Rayonnant Gothic**: The period of French Gothic architecture between c. 1240 and 1350, characterized by a shift in focus away from the High Gothic mode of great scale toward a greater concern for two dimensional surfaces and the repetition of decorative motifs at different scales.
- **ambulatory**: The round walkway encircling the altar in many cathedrals.
- **Romanesque**: European architecture containing both Roman and Byzantine elements; sometimes applied to the debased style of the later Roman Empire, but especially to the more developed architecture prevailing from the 8th to the 12th centuries.

The Abbey Church of Saint Denis, also known as the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Denis, is a large medieval abbey church in the commune of Saint Denis, now a northern suburb of Paris. This site originated as a Gallo-Roman cemetery in late Roman times. Around 475 CE, St. Genevieve established a church at this site. In the 7^{th} century, this structure was replaced by a much grander construction, on the orders of Dagobert I, King of the Franks.

The Basilica of Saint Denis is an architectural landmark, the first major structure of which a substantial part was designed and built in the Gothic style . Both stylistically and structurally, it heralded the change from Romanesque architecture to Gothic architecture . Before the term "Gothic" came into common use, it was known as the "French Style."

Saint Denis is a patron saint of France and, according to legend, was the first Bishop of Paris. Legend says that he was decapitated on the Hill of Montmartre and subsequently carried his head to the site of the current church, indicating where he wanted to be buried.

Saint Denis, from the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris: Saint Denis was martyred in connection with the Decian persecution of Christians, shortly after CE 250.

Dagobert I refounded the church as the Abbey of Saint Denis, a Benedictine monastery. Dagobert also commissioned a new shrine to house the saint's remains; it was created by his chief counselor, Eligius, a goldsmith by training.

Tomb of Dagobert I: Dagobert's tomb was improved during the 13th century at the Basilica of Saint Denis.

Abbot Suger

Abbot Suger (circa 1081-1151), Abbot of Saint Denis from 1122 and a friend and confidant of French kings, had been given the abbey as an oblate at the age of 10 and began work around 1135 on rebuilding and enlarging it.

Suger was the patron of the rebuilding of Saint Denis, but not the architect, as was often assumed in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact it appears that two distinct architects, or master masons, were involved in the 12th century changes. Both remain anonymous, but their work can be distinguished stylistically. The first, who was responsible for the initial work at the western end, favored conventional Romanesque capitals and molding profiles with rich and individualized detailing. His successor, who completed the western facade and upper stories of the narthex before going on to build the new choir , displayed a more restrained approach to decorative effects, relying on a simple repertoire of motifs , which may have proved more suitable for the lighter Gothic style that he helped to create.

Suger's western extension was completed in 1140 and the three new chapels in the narthex were consecrated on June 9th of that year. On completion of the west front, Abbot Suger moved on to the reconstruction of the eastern end. He wanted a choir (chancel) that would be suffused with light. To achieve his aims, Suger's masons drew on the new elements that had evolved or been

introduced to Romanesque architecture: the pointed arch , the ribbed vault , the ambulatory with radiating chapels, the clustered columns supporting ribs springing in different directions, and the flying buttresses , which enabled the insertion of large clerestory windows. This was the first time that these features had all been brought together. The new structure was finished and dedicated on June 11th of 1144, in the presence of the King.

Abbey Church of Saint Denis: This is the west facade of the Basilica of Saint Denis, showcasing the distinct features of Romanesque architecture.

Thus, the Abbey of Saint Denis became the prototype for further building in the royal domain of northern France. Through the rule of the Angevin dynasty , the style was introduced to England and spread throughout France, the Low Countries, Germany, Spain, northern Italy, and Sicily.

The dark Romanesque nave , with its thick walls and small window openings, was rebuilt using the latest techniques, in what is now known as Gothic. This new style, which differed from Suger's earlier works as much as they had differed from their Romanesque precursors , reduced the wall area to an absolute minimum. Solid masonry was replaced with vast window openings filled with brilliant stained glass and interrupted only by the most slender of bar tracery—not only in the clerestory but also, perhaps for the first time, in the normally dark triforium level. The upper facades of the two much-enlarged transepts were filled with two spectacular rose windows . As with Suger's earlier rebuilding work, the identity of the architect or master mason is unknown.

The abbey is often referred to as the "royal necropolis of France" as it is the site where the kings of France and their families were buried for centuries. All but three of the monarchs of France from the 10th century until 1789 have their remains here. The effigies of many of the kings and queens are on their tombs, but during the French Revolution , those tombs were opened and the bodies were moved to mass graves.

Gothic Architecture: La Saint-Chapelle

Louis IX's patronage of the arts drove much innovation in Gothic art and architecture, exemplified by his commission of La Saint-Chappelle, an example of Rayonnant Gothic architecture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the innovations in Gothic art and architecture seen in La Saint-Chappelle

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Louis IX established the Gothic chapel Sainte-Chapelle to house his collection of Christian relics in the mid-13th century.
- Louis IX's artistic and architectural patronage was both innovative and highly influential among European royalty.
- Louis IX was made a saint in 1297, and remains the only French monarch to have been canonized.
- Sainte-Chapelle epitomized the Rayonnant Gothic style of architecture.

Key Terms

- **Rayonnant Gothic**: The period of French Gothic architecture between c. 1240 and 1350, characterized by a shift in focus away from the High Gothic mode of great scale and height toward a greater concern for two dimensional surfaces and the repetition of decorative motifs at different scales. Rayonnant structures tend to be smaller than High Gothic Cathedrals. This style is also known as Court Style.
- **Sainte-Chapelle**: A chapel in the courtyard of the royal palace on the Île de la Cité, built to house Louis IX's collection of Holy relics.

Louis IX ruled during the so-called "golden century of Saint Louis," when the Kingdom of France was at its height of power in Europe, both politically and economically. The king of France was regarded as a *primus inter pares* among the kings and rulers of the continent. He commanded the largest army, and ruled the largest and most wealthy kingdom of Europe, which was the European center of arts and intellectual thought (La Sorbonne) at the time. The prestige and respect for King Louis IX resulted more from his benevolent personality than from his military domination. For his contemporaries, he was the quintessential example of the Christian prince, and embodied the whole of Christendom in his person. The King was later recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church.

Bust of St. Louis, ca. 1300 from the church of Mainneville, Eure, France: Louis IX, or Saint Louis, was a revered leader and strong patron of the arts during the Gothic period.

The style of Louis' court radiated throughout Europe through the purchase of art objects from Parisian masters for export and by the marriage of the King's daughters and female relatives to foreign husbands. Louis' personal chapel, La Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, was copied more than once by his descendants elsewhere.

Sainte-Chapelle, ceiling of the lower chapel: Saint Louis' Sainte-Chapelle epitomizes the Rayonnant Gothic style as was King Louis IX's personal chapel.

La Sainte-Chapelle (The Holy Chapel) is one of the only surviving buildings of the Capetian royal palace on the Île de la Cité in the heart of Paris, France. It was commissioned by King Louis IX of France to house his collection of relics of the passion, including the Crown of Thorns—one of the most important relics in medieval Christendom. Begun some time after 1239 and consecrated on April 26, 1248, the Sainte-Chapelle is considered among the highest achievements of the Rayonnant period of Gothic architecture . Although damaged during the French revolution and heavily restored in the 19th century, it retains one of the most extensive *in-situ* collections (collections that are still in their original positions) of 13th century stained glass anywhere in the world. The glass depicts stories from the Old Testament and focuses heavily on the depictions of biblical kings, both good and bad. Scholars believe the inclusion of "bad" kings, along with the good, were meant as a lesson for the royal viewer to learn from both good and bad examples of rulership.

La Sainte-Chapelle is a prime example of the phase of Gothic architectural style called "Rayonnant Gothic," also known as Court Style, and is marked by its sense of weightlessness and strong vertical emphasis. Rayonnant structures tend to be smaller than the High Gothic Cathedrals that came before them. La Sainte-Chapelle stands squarely upon a lower chapel, which served as parish church for all the inhabitants of the palace, which was the seat of government. However, the chapel proper was a private royal chapel and scholars have noted how the structure almost looks like metalwork , as if the chapel itself is a reliquary .

English Gothic Architecture

English Gothic architecture (c. 1180–1520) is defined by pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses, large windows, and spires.

Learning Objectives

Define the characteristics and particular styles of English Gothic architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Gothic style originated in France with the choir of the Basilique Saint-Denis, built by Abbot Suger and dedicated in June 1144.
- The lancet , a pointed arch , was the most crucial development of the Early Gothic period (c. 1180–1250), resulting in graceful buildings with thinner walls and more light.
- While French Gothic Cathedrals were built to be increasingly tall, English Gothic Cathedrals tended to emphasize the length of the building rather than the height.
- The Decorated Gothic Period (c. 1250–1350) is subdivided into the earlier Geometric Period and later Curvilinear Period, differentiated by styles of window tracery .
- Known for emphasizing vertical lines , the austerity of the Perpendicular Gothic Period was a response to the pandemic Black Death , which emerged in England in 1348.

Key Terms

- **Decorated Gothic Period**: A name given specifically to a division of English Gothic architecture, which was broken into two periods: the Geometric style (1250–1290) and the Curvilinear style (1290–1350).
- **choir**: The part of a church where the singing group assembles for song.
- **Early English Gothic Period** :A period in the late 12th century, characterized by pointed arches, that superseded the Romanesque style.

Gothic architecture flourished in England from approximately 1180 to 1520. This style is defined by pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses , large windows, and spires . The Gothic style was first developed in France, where the various elements had first been used together within a single building at the choir of the Basilique Saint-Denis north of Paris, built by Abbot Suger and dedicated in June 1144. The English adopted the Gothic style, however, they adapted it to their own regional preferences. While French Gothic Cathedrals were built to be increasingly tall, English Gothic Cathedrals tended to emphasize the length of the building rather than the height.

Wells Cathedral, Somerset, England: This Cathedral showcases characteristics of Gothic architecture with the pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses, large windows, and spires, but emphasizes the length of the building, rather than the height.

Many of the largest and finest works of English architecture, notably the medieval cathedrals of England, are largely built in the Gothic style. The earliest large-scale applications of Gothic architecture in England are at Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey . Castles, palaces, great houses, universities, parish churches, and many smaller unpretentious secular buildings, including almshouses and trade halls, were also built in this style.

Early English Gothic Period

The Early English Gothic period lasted from the late 12th century until midway through the 13th century, according to most modern scholars. By 1175, the Gothic style had been firmly established in England with the completion of the Choir at Canterbury Cathedral by William of Sens.

The most significant characteristic development of the Early English period was the pointed arch known as the *lancet*. Compared with the rounded Romanesque style, the pointed arch of the Early English Gothic is aesthetically more elegant and is more efficient at distributing the weight of stonework, making it possible to span higher and wider gaps using narrower columns . It also allows for much greater variation in proportions.

Using the pointed arch, walls could become less massive and window openings could be larger and grouped more closely together, so architects could achieve more open, airy, and graceful buildings. At its purest, the style was simple and austere, emphasizing the height of the building, as if aspiring heavenward. In the late 12th century the Early English Gothic style superseded the Romanesque style, and during the late 13th century it developed into the Decorated Gothic style, which lasted until the mid 14th century.

Decorated Gothic Period

The Decorated period in architecture is traditionally broken into two periods: the Geometric style (1250–1290) and the Curvilinear style (1290–1350). Decorated architecture is characterized by its window tracery, which are elaborate patterns that fill the top portions of windows. The tracery style was geometric at first, and flowing in the later period during the 14th century. Vaulting also became more elaborate, with the use of increasing numbers of ribs , initially for structural and later for aesthetic reasons.

Examples of the Decorated style can be found in many British churches and cathedrals. Principal examples are the east ends of Lincoln Cathedral and of Carlisle Cathedral and the west fronts of York Minster and of Lichfield Cathedral.

York Minster Cathedral: The west front of York Minster Cathedral is a fine example of Decorated architecture, in particular the elaborate tracery on the main window. This period saw detailed carving reach its peak, with elaborately carved windows and capitals, often with floral patterns.

Perpendicular Gothic Period

The Perpendicular Gothic period is the third historical division of English Gothic architecture, and is characterized by an emphasis on vertical lines. The Perpendicular style began under the royal architects William Ramsey and John Sponlee, and lasted into the mid 16th century.

The Perpendicular style grew out of the shadow of the Black Death, a disease that killed approximately half of England's population in 18 months between June 1348 and December 1349 and returned in 1361–62 to kill another fifth of the population. This epidemic dramatically impacted every aspect of society, including arts and culture , and designers moved away from the flamboyance and jubilation present in the Decorated style. Architects were also responding to labor shortages resulting from the plague, and therefore relied on less elaborate designs.

Perpendicular linearity is particularly obvious in the design of windows, which became immense, allowing greater scope for stained glass craftsmen. Some of the finest features of this period are the magnificent timber roofs: hammerbeam roofs, such as those of Westminster Hall (1395), Christ Church Hall, Oxford, and Crosby Hall, appeared for the first time. Gothic architecture

continued to flourish in England for 100 years after the precepts of Renaissance architecture were formalized in Florence in the early 15th century.

Gloucester Cathedral: The Gloucester Cathedral exemplifies the Perpendicular Gothic Period. The interior conveys an impression of a “cage” of stone and glass, typical of the period. The walls and windows are sharper and less flamboyant than those of the earlier style.

German Gothic Architecture

Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval period in the Holy Roman Empire, from approximately 1140–1400.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the principal features of German Gothic architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Gothic style first developed in France. Territories that constitute modern day Germany adopted the French Gothic and developed regional distinctions to this style.
- Brick Gothic is a style of Gothic architecture common in Northern Europe, especially in Northern Germany and the regions around the Baltic Sea without natural rock resources where the buildings are built, more or less, using only bricks.
- Hall churches are another distinctively German adaptation to the French Gothic style.

Key Terms

- **nave**: The middle or body of a church, extending from the transepts to the principal entrances.
- **Middle Ages**: The period of time in Europe between the decline of the Roman Empire and the revival of letters (the Renaissance) or, according to Henry Hallam, the period beginning with the sixth and ending with the fifteenth century.
- **spire**: A tapering structure built on a roof or tower, especially as one of the central architectural features of a church or cathedral roof.

Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval period in the Holy Roman Empire, from approximately 1140–1400. The Gothic style first developed in France. Territories that constitute modern day Germany adopted the French Gothic and developed regional distinctions to this style.

German Gothic architecture is notable for its enormous towers and spires . Sometimes they were so big that they were left unfinished until modern times. The spires are quite different than English spires because they are made of lacy “openwork.” There

are also many hallenkirke (or hall churches), which have no clerestorey windows. The nave and the aisles are about the same height.

Freiburg Cathedral was built in three stages, the first beginning in 1120 under the Dukes of Zahringen, the second beginning in 1210, and the third in 1230. Of the original building, only the foundations still exist. It is particularly notable for its 116-meter tower, which is nearly square at the base , and the dodecagonal star gallery at its center. Above this gallery, the tower is octagonal and tapered, with the spire at the top. It is the only Gothic church tower in Germany completed in the Middle Ages (1330) that survived the November 1944 bombing raids that destroyed all of the houses on the west and north side of the market.

Freiburg Cathedral: View of the Freiburg Cathedral in Germany

Cologne Cathedral is, after Milan Cathedral, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. Construction began in 1248 and took, with interruptions, until 1880 to complete—a period of over 600 years. It is 144.5 metres long, 86.5 m wide, and its two towers are 157 m tall. Because of its enormous twin spires, it also has the largest façade of any church in the world. The choir of the cathedral, measured between the piers , also holds the distinction of having the largest height to width ratio of any Medieval church.

Cologne Cathedral: The Cologne Cathedral is an example of German Gothic architecture.

The building of Gothic churches was accompanied by the construction of guild houses and town halls by the rising bourgeoisie. Examples are the Gothic Town Hall (13th century) at Stralsund, Bremen Town Hall (1410), and the (reconstructed) city hall of Munster (originally from 1350).

The dwellings of this period were mainly timber-framed buildings, as can still be seen in Goslar and Quedlinburg. Quedlinburg has one of the oldest half-timbered houses in Germany. The method of construction, used extensively for town houses of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, lasted into the twentieth century for rural buildings.

Brick Gothic

Brick Gothic (Backsteingotik) is a specific style of Gothic architecture common in Northern Europe, especially in Northern Germany and the regions around the Baltic Sea that lack natural rock resources. The structures are built, more or less, using only bricks. Stralsund City Hall and St. Nicholas Church are examples of this style. Cities such as Lubeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, and Greifswald are shaped by this regional style. St. Mary's in Lübeck, built between 1200 and 1350, was a model for many North German churches.

Hall Churches

Hall churches are another example of German Gothic architecture that is distinct from French Gothic. In hall churches, the aisles and nave are almost the same height and the stained glass windows are typically the full height of the walls, allowing in maximum light and space .

Munich Frauenkirche, Bavaria: Hall churches are a distinctively German interpretation of the Gothic style.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Saintdenis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Saintdenis.gif. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Saint-Denis_-_Basilique_-_Ext%C3%A9rieur_fa%C3%A7ade_ouest.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dagobert I. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagobert_I. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Basilica of St Denis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_St_Denis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rayonnant Gothic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rayonnant%20Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ambulatory. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ambulatory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abbey Church of Saint Denis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey%20Church%20of%20Saint%20Denis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Louis9 profilebust. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Louis9_profilebust.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Ste Chapelle Basse s. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ste_Chapelle_Basse_s.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Louis ix. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_ix%23Patron_of_arts_and_arbiter_of_Europe. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sainte-Chapelle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sainte-Chapelle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sainte-Chapelle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sainte-Chapelle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rayonnant Gothic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rayonnant%20Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gloucester_Cathedral_High_Altar,_Gloucestershire,_UK_-_Diliff.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Gothic_architecture#/media/File:Gloucester_Cathedral_High_Altar,_Gloucestershire,_UK_-_Diliff.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wells_Cathedral_West_Front_Exterior2C_UK_-_Diliff.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wells_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/3/3f/YorkMinsterWest.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- English Gothic architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Gothic_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early English Gothic Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early%20English%20Gothic%20Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- choir. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/choir. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Decorated Gothic Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Decorated%20Gothic%20Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Munich_Frauenkirche_28HDR29_28841933081829.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hall_church. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Freiburg Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Freiburg_Cathedral. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cologne Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cologne_Cathedral.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Germany. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Germany%23Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Brick Gothic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick_Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- spire. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/spire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- nave. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nave. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Middle Ages. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Middle_Ages. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 18.2: Gothic Architecture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

18.3: Gothic Sculpture

Gothic Sculpture

Gothic art existed as monumental religious sculpture in churches, such as in the Cologne Cathedral, and as small, portable sculptures.

Learning Objectives

Explain how the art of the Cologne Cathedral embodies Gothic sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The most renowned work of art in the Cologne Cathedral is the Shrine of the Three Kings, an elaborately carved reliquary traditionally believed to hold the remains of the Three Magi or Three Wise Men.
- The Gero-Kreuz, a large crucifix carved in oak with traces of paint and gilding is the oldest large crucifix north of the Alps.
- Aside from monumental sculpture, smaller, portable sculptural pieces were also popular during the Gothic period in some urban centers, taking the form of small reliefs in ivory , bone, and wood and covering both religious and secular subjects.

Key Terms

- **gilt**: A thin layer of gold or other metal; gilding.
- **sacristy**: A room in a church where sacred vessels, books, vestments, etc. are kept. Sometimes also used by clergy to prepare for worship or for meetings.
- **polyptych**: A work consisting of multiple painted or carved panels joined together, often with hinges.

Gothic art was a style that developed concurrently with Gothic architecture during the mid-12th century. Primary media in the Gothic period included sculpture, panel painting, stained glass fresco , and illuminated manuscripts . The earliest Gothic art existed as monumental sculpture on the walls of cathedrals and abbeys . Elaborate sculpture was used extensively to decorate the facades of these buildings.

Cologne Cathedral

The Cologne Cathedral is a renowned monument to German Gothic architecture as well as a World Heritage Site home to numerous works of art and decorative sculpture. Its exterior serves as a stunning example of German Gothic architecture, while its interior houses numerous examples of gothic sculpture and artwork.

Cologne Cathedral: The Cologne Cathedral is an example of German Gothic architecture.

One of the important works in the cathedral is the High Altar, installed in 1322. It is constructed out of black marble, with a solid slab 15 feet long forming the top. The front and sides are overlaid with white marble, nine inches into which figure are set, with the Coronation of the Virgin at the centre.

The most renowned work of art in the cathedral is the Shrine of the Three Kings. It was commissioned by Philip von Heinsberg, archbishop of Cologne from 1167 to 1191, and created by Nicholas of Verdun. It is traditionally believed to hold the remains of the Three Magi or Three Wise Men, whose relics were acquired at the conquest of Milan in 1164. The shrine takes the form of a large reliquary in the shape of a basilican church, made of bronze and silver. It is gilded and ornamented with architectonic details, figurative sculpture, enamels, and gemstones. The entire outside of the shrine is covered with an elaborate decorative overlay. There are 74 high relief figures in silver gilt in all, not counting smaller additional figures in the background decoration. On the sides, images of the prophets decorate the lower sections, while images of the apostles and evangelists decorate the upper part. On one end, there are (across the bottom, from left to right) images of the Adoration of the Magi, Mary enthroned with the infant Jesus, and the baptism of Christ. Above, one may see Christ enthroned at the Last Judgment. The opposite end shows scenes of the Passion: the scourging of Christ (lower left), and his crucifixion (lower left), with the resurrected Christ above. The figures, with their fully modeled bodies and wet drapery , demonstrate how sculptors in the Gothic period were familiar with classical references and were able to employ them in their works.

Shrine of the Three Kings: The Shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne Cathedral is said to house the remains of the Three Magi and serves as an example of German Gothic sculpture.

Near the sacristy is the Gero-Kreuz, a large crucifix carved in oak with restored paint and gilding. It is the oldest large crucifix north of the Alps, as well as the oldest known free standing Northern sculpture of the medieval period.

The Gero-Kreuz: The Gero-Kreuz is the oldest large sculpture of the crucified Christ north of the Alps and is located in the Cologne Cathedral.

Portable Sculpture

Aside from monumental sculpture, smaller, portable sculptural pieces were also popular during the Gothic period. Small carvings, made generally for the lay market, became a considerable industry in urban centers. Gothic sculptures independent of architectural ornament were primarily created as devotional objects for the home or intended as donations for local churches. Nevertheless, small reliefs in ivory, bone, and wood covered both religious, as well as secular subjects, and were for church and domestic use. Such sculptures were often the work of urban artisans. The most typical subject for three dimensional small statues is the Virgin Mary alone or with child. Additional objects typical of the time included small devotional polyptychs, single figures, especially of the Virgin Mary, mirror-cases, combs, and elaborate caskets with scenes from romances.

Italian Gothic Sculpture: The Pisano Family

Nicola Pisano and his son Giovanni developed a Proto-Renaissance style of sculpture in Italy combining classical Roman and Gothic styles.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Proto-Renaissance style of sculpture developed by the Pisano family

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Pisano family's relief sculptures drew heavily from carved Roman sarcophagi and were characterized by sophisticated and crowded compositions and a sympathetic handling of nudity.
- Nicola Pisano was born between 1220 and 1225. He was active in Tuscany and trained in the local workshops of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II.
- Nicola Pisano's most famous work is the pulpit at the Pisa Baptistery, which synthesizes Classical and French Gothic styles and depicts scenes from the life of Christ. The inspiration for the structure probably came from the triumphal Arch of Constantine in Rome .
- Giovanni Pisano was born in Pisa around 1250 and trained as a sculptor in his father's workshop. He worked alongside his father on the pulpit in the Siena Cathedral and the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia.
- Giovanni's early style was almost indistinguishable from his father's but developed further after Nicola's death. It was more French Gothic than Classical in style and characterized by bold naturalism and animated figures.
- Giovanni's greatest work is a pulpit at the Cathedral of Pisa, which depicts nine dramatic scenes from the New Testament carved in white marble with a chiaroscuro effect, and a naturalistic carving of a naked Hercules .

Key Terms

- **pulpit**: A raised platform in a church, usually enclosed, where the minister or preacher stands to conduct the sermon.
- **sarcophagus**: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

Nicola Pisano (ca. 1220–1284) and his son Giovanni Pisano (ca. 1250–1315) were Italian sculptors during the Gothic age who developed a Classical-influenced style of sculpture known as Proto-Renaissance. Their relief sculptures drew heavily from the carved Roman sarcophagus and were characterized by sophisticated and crowded compositions and a sympathetic handling of nudity. They are sometimes considered to be the first modern sculptors.

The specifics of Nicola Pisano's origins are uncertain. He was born between 1220 and 1225 in the southern Italian region of Apulia and trained in the local workshops of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. He moved to Tuscany around 1245 and was active in the cities of Lucca, Pisa, Siena, Pistoia, and Perugia. His most famous work is the pulpit of the Pisa baptistery, which is a masterful synthesis of the French Gothic style and Classical style. Made of white Carrara marble, the pulpit depicts scenes from the life of Jesus Christ in a Classical style. The figures wear tunics in a Roman fashion, and his representation of the Madonna is reminiscent of the regal bearing of goddesses in late Roman sculpture. The inspiration for the pulpit probably came from the triumphal arches in Rome. Nicola Pisano had seen the arches on his travels, particularly the Arch of Constantine, which has many features the pulpit imitates, including figures standing on top of columns and an attic storey with sculpted scenes.

Detail of the pulpit at Pisa Baptistery: Pulpit (detail): the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Magi. The trefoil arches supporting the pulpit show French Gothic influence.

Other well-known projects undertaken by Nicola Pisano include a marble pulpit for the Siena Cathedral, a commission he received after making his name in Pisa, and the Fontana Maggiore or Great Fountain at Perugia, which he worked on alongside his son Giovanni.

Fontana Maggiore, Perugia: Nicola and Giovanni Pisano worked side by side on the Fontana Maggiore at Perugia. On the twenty-five sides of the basin are sculptures representing prophets and saints, the labors of the months, the signs of the zodiac, scenes from Genesis, and events from Roman history.

Nicola's son, Giovanni Pisano, was born in Pisa around 1250 and trained as a sculptor in his father's workshop. He worked alongside his father on the pulpit in the Siena Cathedral and the *Fontana Maggiore* in Perugia. His earliest works imitated his father's style, and it is difficult to separate the contributions of the two sculptors. However, after his Nicola's death, Giovanni's style grew more distinct. While it continued to incorporate Classical influences, it was more French Gothic in style and characterized by a bold, dramatic animation that had been missing in Nicola's serene sculptural style.

Giovanni was the chief architect of the Siena Cathedral between 1287 and 1296. He also worked on statues decorating the exterior of the Pisa Baptistery, the facade of the church of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno (St. Paul on the Bank of the Arno) at Pisa, and a monument commissioned by the emperor Henry VII, commemorating his wife Margaret of Brabant.

Giovanni's greatest work is arguably a pulpit at the Cathedral of Pisa sculpted between 1302 and 1310. The pulpit incorporates a dramatic depiction of nine scenes from the New Testament carved in white marble with a chiaroscuro effect and a naturalistic carving of a nude Hercules. The figure of *Prudence* in the pulpit is thought to have been an inspiration for the Tuscan painter Masaccio in his *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*.

Pulpit of Pisa Cathedral: The pulpit at the Pisa Cathedral shows Giovanni Pisano's distinct preference for a bold, animated style.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Cologne Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cologne_Cathedral.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gero Crucifix. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gero_Crucifix. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cologne Cathedral Shrine of Magi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cologne_Cathedral_Shrine_of_Magi.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cologne Cathedral. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shrine of the Three Kings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrine_of_the_Three_Kings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- gilt. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gilt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sacristy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sacristy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- polyptych. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/polyptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pisa.Baptistery.pulpit02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pisa.Baptistery.pulpit02.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- GPisano-PulpitoPisa background blurred. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:GPisano-PulpitoPisa_background_blurred.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Perugia 018. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Perugia_018.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Giovanni Pisano. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Pisano. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nicola Pisano. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicola_Pisano. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Gothic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pulpit. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pulpit. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sarcophagus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sarcophagus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 18.3: Gothic Sculpture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

18.4: Gothic Painting

Italian Gothic Painting

Italian Gothic painting developed a distinctively western character and flourished from the second half of the 13th century onward.

Learning Objectives

Explain Cimabue's and Duccio's break from Italo-Byzantine style into the Italian Gothic style of painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic style of painting happened quite slowly in Italy because Italy was strongly influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting.
- The initial changes to the Byzantine-inspired Romanesque style were quite small, marked merely by an increase in Gothic ornamental detailing rather than a dramatic difference in the style of figures and compositions .
- Cimabue of Florence and Duccio of Siena were trained in the Byzantine style but were the first great Italian painters to break away from the Italo-Byzantine art form . They were pioneers in the move towards naturalism and depicted figures with more lifelike proportions, expressions, and shading.
- Giotto's style represented a clear break with the Byzantine tradition, making use of foreshortening , chiaroscuro techniques, and depicting highly expressive figures.
- During the 14th century, Tuscan painting was predominantly accomplished in the International Gothic style, characterized by a formalized sweetness and grace, elegance, and richness of detail, and an idealized quality.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: Refers to the art of Europe from approximately 1000 AD to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **Foreshortening**: A technique for creating the appearance that the object of a drawing is extending into space by shortening the lines with which that object is drawn.

The transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic style of painting happened quite slowly in Italy, several decades after it had first taken hold in France. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade , the influx of Byzantine paintings and mosaics increased greatly. This was partly the reason that Italy was strongly influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting.

The initial changes to the Byzantine-inspired Romanesque style were quite small, marked merely by an increase in Gothic ornamental detailing rather than a dramatic difference in the style of figures and compositions. Italian Gothic painting began to flourish in its own right around the second half of the 13th century with the contributions of Cimabue of Florence (ca. 1240–c a. 1302) and Duccio of Siena (ca. 1255–60–ca. 1318–19), and developed an even more strongly realistic character under Giotto (1266–1337).

Cimabue and Duccio were trained in the Byzantine style, but they were the first great Italian painters to start breaking away from the Italo-Byzantine art form. In a period when scenes and forms were still relatively flat and stylized , Cimabue was a pioneer in the move towards naturalism in Italian painting. His figures were depicted with more lifelike proportions and shading, as evident in the Crucifixion scene for the church of Santa Croce in Florence (1287-88), which demonstrates delicately shaded draperies and the chiaroscuro technique. His *Maestà di Santa Trinita*, a Madonna and Child painting commissioned by the church of Santa Trinita in Florence between 1290 and 1300, makes use of perspective in portraying Mary's three-dimensional throne, and depicts the figures with sweeter and more natural expressions than typical in the somber Romanesque style.

Crucifixion of Santa Croce (Tempera on Wood): The figure of Christ slumps heavily to one side and is clad in delicate, folded drapery in Cimabue's Crucifixion.

Much like Cimabue, Duccio of Siena painted in the Byzantine style but made his own personal contributions in the Gothic style in the linearity, the rich but delicate detail, and the warm and refined colors of his work. He was also one of the first Italian painters to place figures in architectural settings. Over time, he achieved greater naturalism and softness in his work and made use of foreshortening and chiaroscuro techniques. His characters are surprisingly expressive and human, interacting tenderly with each other. Duccio is considered the founder of the Sienese Gothic school of painting.

Maestà del Duomo di Siena (Tempera and Gold on Wood): The Maestà of the Siena Cathedral is a painted altarpiece composed of many individual paintings. It was commissioned in 1308 by the city of Siena and is widely regarded as Duccio's masterpiece.

Both Cimabue and Duccio were probably influenced by Giotto in their later years. Giotto was renowned for his distinctively western style, basing his compositions not on a Byzantine tradition but, rather, on his observation of life. His figures were solidly three-dimensional, had discernible anatomy, and were clothed with garments that appear to have weight and structure. His greatest contribution to Italian Gothic art was his intense depiction of a range of emotions, which his contemporaries began to emulate enthusiastically. While painting in the Gothic style, he is considered the herald of the Renaissance .

During the 14th century, Tuscan painting was predominantly accomplished in the International Gothic style, which was prevalent throughout Western Europe at the time. In its fully developed form, it is best seen in the work of Simone Martini of Siena (1284–1344) and Gentile da Fabriano (1370–1427), whose paintings are characterized by a formalized sweetness and grace, an elegance and richness of detail, and an idealized quality that was missing in Giotto's stark work. The tempera altarpieces of Fra Angelico bridge the gap between the International Gothic and Renaissance styles of painting, making use of Gothic elaboration, gold leaf , and brilliant color.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Duccio maesta1021. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duccio_maesta1021.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cimabue 025. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cimabue_025.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Maestu00e0 (Duccio). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maest%C3%A0_(Duccio). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gotico (arte). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotico_(arte). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duccio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Duccio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gothic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanesque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Foreshortening. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Foreshortening. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 18.4: Gothic Painting is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

18.5: Gothic Metalwork

Gothic Metalwork and Ivory Carvings

In France, metal and ivory pieces took on a diminutive but ornate characteristic, and required great skill to create.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate metal and ivory art work in late medieval France

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Metalworkers and sculptors working in ivory made an impact on the the art, architecture, craft, and interior design world of France during the period. While that work was often more diminutive, metal and ivory art was still quite striking.
- In France the dominant trend was towards the ornate, especially decorative pieces used as components in doors. These included door knockers, locks, and even hinges with elaborate adornment.
- Paris was a center of production for ivory sculptures of various forms . In addition to various small figures and talismans, there was a fashion for narrative panels in groups of two or three (diptychs and tryptychs), or multi-panel polytychs.

Key Terms

- **diptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on two tablets, usually connected by hinges.
- **talisman**: A magical object worn for protection against ill will or the supernatural, or to confer the wearer with a boon such as good luck, good health, or power(s).

France is credited with exporting the Gothic style of architecture during this period. Compared to Gothic architecture , which was better known for its large dramatic features such as flying buttresses and elaborate stained glass, metal and ivory art work was often more diminutive—but it was still quite striking. Metalworkers and sculptors working in ivory made an impact on the the art, architecture, craft, and interior design world of France during the period.

Metalwork

Iron work during the Gothic period took on various styles and trends, from large rough wrought-iron works to more delicate items. In France the dominant trend was towards the ornate, especially decorative pieces used as components in doors. These included door knockers, locks, and even hinges with elaborate adornment. These works required high levels of skill and craftsmanship.

The door to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris is a key example. Notre Dame is one of the first buildings to use a flying buttress, which became characteristic of Gothic architecture. It is also well known for its sculptures, stained glass, and gargoyles. But the door of the cathedral is, in and of itself, a work of art, particularly when one takes into account the limited smithing techniques of the time.

Notre Dame de Paris—Door knocker: The elaborate door knocker is just one of the details worked into the door of the Notre Dame Cathedral.

Norte Dame de Paris—Door: The elaborate decoration of the door to Notre Dame Cathedral is a strong example of the ornate metalwork of this period.

Ivory

Ivory became available once again in Europe in the Middle Ages and created a trend for ivory sculptures of various forms. In addition to small figures and talismans, there was a fashion for narrative panels in groups of two or three (diptychs and tryptychs), or multi-panel polytychs. Paris became a center for the creation of these works. Additionally, their popularity spread beyond church art, and these pieces could be found in homes and used for decorative furnishing. These works were considered luxury items; ivory work could often be found on the backs of hairbrushes, mirrors, and other luxury items. The works often portrayed scenes of romance and love rather than the religious scenes more typical of Gothic art.

Siege of the Castle of Love—Mirror: This mirror casing is an example of the ornate ivory work that became part of everyday objects in the Middle Ages.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Bestaand:NotreDame Door. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: nds-nl.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestaand:NotreDame_Door.jpg%23file. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Door detail Notre Dame. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Door_detail_Notre_Dame.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Siu00e8ge du chu00e2teau d'amour. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Si%C3%A8ge_du_ch%C3%A2teau_d'amour.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Notre Dame de Paris. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Notre_Dame_de_Paris. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ivory carving. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_carving%23High_medieval_onwards. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- talisman. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/talisman. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- diptych. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 18.5: Gothic Metalwork is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

18.6: Italy in the Gothic Period

Italian Painting: 1200–1400

In the early Renaissance, painters began to embrace naturalistic styles, creating images with attention to form and space.

Learning Objectives

Identify the prominent artists and styles in Italy during the Early Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The *Florentine School of Painting* is characterized by the naturalism in painting in Florence that started to emerge in the 13th century.
- The period between 1200 and 1400 in Italy provides an important bridge in Art History between the Medieval period and Byzantine and Gothic styles , and the Early Modern period and Renaissance styles.
- Painters began to embrace the more naturalistic styles. Harkening back to classical figures, they created images portraying strong emotion and that paid attention to relationships between figures. Their painting expressed a type of realism not present in Byzantine styles.

Key Terms

- **tempera**: A method of painting where the artist mixes pigment with water and a binder, usually egg.
- **Renaissance**: The 14th century revival of classical art, architecture, literature, and learning that originated in Italy and spread throughout Europe over the following two centuries.

The *Florentine School of Painting* is characterized by the naturalism in art that started to emerge in Florence in the 13th century. This set the stage for what would become the great period of Florentine art in later centuries that would include the work of great artists such as Michelangelo, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Donatello, and Lippi.

However, art in Florence and northern Italy during the period between 1200 and 1400 was still in transition; it was a bridge in Art History between the Medieval period and Byzantine and Gothic styles, and the Early Modern period and Renaissance styles. Sometimes referred to as the proto-Renaissance period, art and architecture in northern Italy provided important hints at the trends that would take hold over the next centuries in the rest of Europe.

City states and duchies such as Pisa, Milan, Lucca, and Florence were the main homes of these developments. In spite of the many challenges during the period, such as the ongoing ravages of the Black Plague, these city states experienced periods of politically stability and economic growth, which provided a good foundation for new experimentation in art.

In Florence, leading families prospered under the economic growth promoted through trade. Each of these leading families vied for power, but also for cultural prominence, and became great patrons of the arts (the Medici family being the prime example).

At the same time, there were great changes occurring in art both in terms of styles and philosophies. One important change was a focus on the individual in religious practices, which also translated into a greater naturalistic and humanist focus in art.

Florence

Painters in this city wholeheartedly embraced naturalist styles. Harkening back to classical figures, they created images with attention to portraying strong emotions and relationships between figures—painting that expressed a type of realism not present in Byzantine styles.

One painter who demonstrated the shift that was occurring in Florentine painting during this time is Cimabue (c.1240-1302). In his *Maesta* the viewer may observe elements of both the earlier Byzantine style of painting, as well as the emerging Renaissance style. The work retains the gold background that was familiar in Byzantine icons , and his figures are rendered in a Byzantine style. However, Cimabue made efforts to create space in this work, which would become an important aspect in Renaissance art. His

angels surrounding the Virgin and Child overlap one another to indicate space and Cimabue paid great attention to the Virgin's throne to create a realistic depiction of space as well.

Cimabue, *Maesta*, c.12801285. : Cimabue's artwork reflects the changes that were occurring in Florentine painting during this period, by demonstrating both the older Byzantine style as well as the emerging Renaissance style.

Artists were able to work in Florence at least in part due to the influential art guilds , including the painters' guild Arte dei Medici e Spezeiali. These guilds also became important patrons of the arts, and took over the maintenance and improvements of religious buildings.

Siena

The Sienese School of painting was more conservative than painting in Florence, but nonetheless important, flourishing between the 1200s and 1400s. Some of the important painters from this period included Duccio and his pupils Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini, and Matteo di Giovanni.

Duccio di Buoninsegna is one of the best known Siena painters of the time. His work was often ornate with the use of gold leaf and jewels, demonstrating how Siena was focused on the physical materiality of work. His work in egg tempera also used brighter colors, rounded out features in faces and hands, and played with light and dark colors to highlight the figures under the drapery creating natural form , which was very unlike Byzantine figures but important to emerging Renaissance artists.

Duccio's work was considered quite emotional, with a renewed focus on storytelling through the interactions of figures in the images and the selection of strong interpretations of biblical stories. The altarpiece Maestà (1308–1310) is one of his great works. Composed of multiple paintings and commissioned by the city of Sienna, the piece depicts the life of the Virgin Mary and Christ. The Virgin's knee juts out toward the viewer as Duccio has created a realistic sense of form–an essential element of the emerging Renaissance style. While his work retains the gold background and gold halos so important in Byzantine art (and to Sienese patrons), this art acts as a bridge between the late Medieval era and Early Renaissance.

Duccio, *Maestà*, 1308–1311: Duccio's work demonstrates the emerging Renaissance style, as seen in the developed form of the figures, as well as the older Byzantine styles and the Sienese preference for materiality with the use of gold.

Italian Painting: Giotto

Giotto was one of the most revered painters of his time and an important bridge between the medieval and renaissance periods.

Learning Objectives

Describe Giotto's use of naturalism, storytelling, and perspective in his work

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Giotto di Bondone was born during the late 1200s in the Florence region of Italy. He would go on to become one of the most revered painters of his time and an important bridge between the medieval and renaissance periods.
- The Arena Chapel frescoes in Padua, which depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, are some of Giotto's best known masterpieces.
- Scholars debate which works should be attributed to Giotto and which works should be attributed to his assistants or other artists working in his style .
- Giotto's distinct contribution to the history of art was a return to a style that directly references the natural world; his paintings aimed to capture the realism of the human form .

Key Terms

- **fresco**: The technique of applying pigment, mixed with water, to wet plaster. As the pigment and plaster dry they fuse together and the painting physically becomes a part of the wall.

Giotto di Bondone was born during the late 1200s in the Florence region of Italy. He would go on to become one of the most revered painters of his time, and an important bridge between the medieval and renaissance periods.

The Arena Chapel frescoes were commissioned by the patron Enrico Scrovegni and depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. They are Giotto's best known masterpieces.

Kiss of Judas: One of the most dramatic scenes from Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes depicts the moment Judas betrays Christ by identifying him to Roman soldiers.

Scholars debate over which works should be attributed to Giotto and which works should be attributed to assistants or other artists. For example, Giotto appears to have apprenticed with the Florentine painter Cimabue in Rome and may have been responsible for portions of the Chapel at Assisi. However, there is no documentation to confirm his work in Assisi.

Giotto's distinct contribution to the history of art was a return to a style that directly references the natural world, a style that had not been emphasized by Medieval or Byzantine painters. While Medieval and Byzantine styles favored flat, elongated figures and a lack of natural perspective Giotto returned painting to a style that aimed to capture the naturalism of the human form.

Another strength of Giotto's work was his storytelling ability. He was skilled at selecting strong interpretations of Biblical stories and at drawing viewers to the most visually and spiritually rich aspects of the story. This focus on relationships between figures, as well as a renewed interest in perspective and life drawing, are some of the aspects that would become prominent in Renaissance painting.

Italian Architecture 1200-1400

The Gothic style was the leading architectural style in Italy during this time period. However, Italian architects interpreted Gothic architecture differently than they did in France, resulting in a few key regional differences.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the architecture of Florence, Italy, during the Middle Ages and the architecture of the Florence Cathedral

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While the French Gothic style gained popularity in many parts of Europe, the Gothic style was interpreted differently in Italy.
- Gothic buildings in cities such as Florence lack the stained glass that characterizes French Gothic structures and as a whole they lack the emphasized verticality of French Gothic Cathedrals .
- The Florence Cathedral is an example of the Gothic style in Italy.

Key Terms

- **lancet**: A tall, narrow archway with a pointed arch at its top.

- **flying buttress**: A buttress that stands apart from the structure that it supports, and is connected to it by an arch (flyer).

Florence: Architecture and Metalwork

Gothic architecture was developed in France and was characterized by lancet , or pointed, archways used for both windows and doorways. These allowed for both thinner walls and larger windows. The stained glass windows that seemed to replace walls altogether are the hallmark of French Gothic architecture. Other characteristics of the Gothic style include the increased use of flying buttresses to support walls, and a shift towards more slender and ornate columns , and vaulted ceilings.

While the French Gothic style gained popularity in many parts of Europe, the Gothic style was interpreted differently in Italy. Gothic buildings in cities such as Florence lack the stained glass that characterizes French Gothic structures and as a whole they lack the emphasized verticality of French Gothic Cathedrals.

Florence Cathedral

The Florence Cathedral is a great example of the Gothic style in Italy. Begun in 1296, the Cathedral is built in the Gothic style as Renaissance architecture had yet to be developed.

Florence Cathedral, begun 1296: The Cathedral is pictured lit up at night, showcasing its Gothic style and large dome.

As the exterior view of the Cathedral demonstrates, Italian Gothic structures did not incorporate the stained glass windows, which had become so essential to French Gothic structures. The interior of the Cathedral, including the groin vaults and pointed arches , demonstrates the Gothic elements of its architecture quite clearly.

Florence Cathedral, Interior view, begun 1296: In the interior of the Cathedral, you can see the Gothic elements, such as the groin vaults and pointed arches.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Cimabue_-_MaestC3A0_di_Santa_Trinita_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cimabue_-_Maest%C3%A0_di_Santa_Trinita_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Duccio_maesta1021.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duccio_maesta1021.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Florentine School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Florentine_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Albert Van Helden, Florence and Tuscany. September 17, 2013. **Provided by**: OpenStax CNX. **Located at**: http://cnx.org/content/m11936/latest/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Giotto - Scrovegni - -31- - Kiss of Judas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Giotto_-_Scrovegni_-_-31-_-_Kiss_of_Judas.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cappella degli Scrovegni. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cappella_degli_Scrovegni. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Giotto. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Giotto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byzantine art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Florence_Duomo_from_Michelangelo_hill.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duomo_Firenze_Apr_2008.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Cathedral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Il Caparra. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Il_Caparra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Florence. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Florence%23Middle_ages. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Gothic architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Gothic_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lancet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/lancet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- flying buttress. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flying_buttress. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 18.6: Italy in the Gothic Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

19: The Italian Renaissance

19.1: The Italian Renaissance
19.2: Renaissance Architecture
19.3: Renaissance Sculpture
19.4: Renaissance Painting
19.5: The High Renaissance
19.6: Mannerism

This page titled 19: The Italian Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

19.1: The Italian Renaissance

The Italian Renaissance

The art of the Italian Renaissance was influential throughout Europe for centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the art and periodization of the Italian Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Florence school of painting became the dominant style during the Renaissance . Renaissance artworks depicted more secular subject matter than previous artistic movements.
- Michelangelo, da Vinci, and Rafael are among the best known painters of the High Renaissance .
- The High Renaissance was followed by the Mannerist movement, known for elongated figures.

Key Terms

- **fresco**: A type of wall painting in which color pigments are mixed with water and applied to wet plaster. As the plaster and pigments dry, they fuse together and the painting becomes a part of the wall itself.
- **Mannerism**: A style of art developed at the end of the High Renaissance, characterized by the deliberate distortion and exaggeration of perspective, especially the elongation of figures.

The Renaissance began during the 14th century and remained the dominate style in Italy, and in much of Europe, until the 16th century. The term “renaissance” was developed during the 19th century in order to describe this period of time and its accompanying artistic style. However, people who were living during the Renaissance did see themselves as different from their Medieval predecessors. Through a variety of texts that survive, we know that people living during the Renaissance saw themselves as different largely because they were deliberately trying to imitate the Ancients in art and architecture.

Florence and the Renaissance

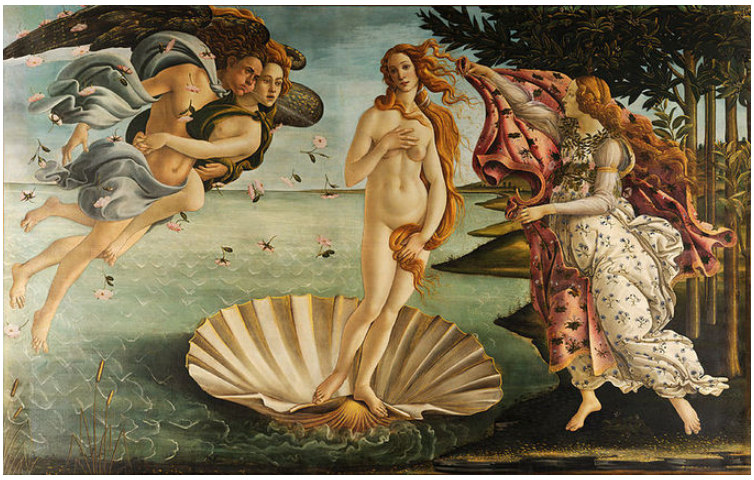
When you hear the term “Renaissance” and picture a style of art, you are probably picturing the Renaissance style that was developed in Florence, which became the dominate style of art during the Renaissance. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Italy was divided into a number of different city states. Each city state had its own government, culture , economy, and artistic style. There were many different styles of art and architecture that were developed in Italy during the Renaissance. Siena, which was a political ally of France, for example, retained a Gothic element to its art for much of the Renaissance.

Certain conditions aided the development of the Renaissance style in Florence during this time period. In the 15th century, Florence became a major mercantile center. The production of cloth drove their economy and a merchant class emerged. Humanism , which had developed during the 14th century, remained an important intellectual movement that impacted art production as well.

Early Renaissance

During the Early Renaissance, artists began to reject the Byzantine style of religious painting and strove to create realism in their depiction of the human form and space . This aim toward realism began with Cimabue and Giotto, and reached its peak in the art of the “Perfect” artists, such as Andrea Mantegna and Paolo Uccello, who created works that employed one point perspective and played with perspective for their educated, art knowledgeable viewer .

During the Early Renaissance we also see important developments in subject matter, in addition to style. While religion was an important element in the daily life of people living during the Renaissance, and remained a driving factor behind artistic production, we also see a new avenue open to panting—mythological subject matter. Many scholars point to Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* as the very first panel painting of a mythological scene. While the tradition itself likely arose from cassone painting, which typically featured scenes from mythology and romantic texts, the development of mythological panel painting would open a world for artistic patronage , production, and themes.



Birth of Venus: Botticelli's Birth of Venus was among the most important works of the early Renaissance.

High Renaissance

The period known as the High Renaissance represents the culmination of the goals of the Early Renaissance, namely the realistic representation of figures in space rendered with credible motion and in an appropriately decorous style. The most well known artists from this phase are Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, and Michelangelo. Their paintings and frescoes are among the most widely known works of art in the world. Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, Raphael's *The School of Athens* and Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling paintings are the masterpieces of this period and embody the elements of the High Renaissance.

Marriage of the Virgin, by Raphael: The painting depicts a marriage ceremony between Mary and Joseph.

Mannerism

High Renaissance painting evolved into Mannerism in Florence. Mannerist artists, who consciously rebelled against the principles of High Renaissance, tended to represent elongated figures in illogical spaces. Modern scholarship has recognized the capacity of Mannerist art to convey strong, often religious, emotion where the High Renaissance failed to do so. Some of the main artists of this period are Pontormo, Bronzino, Rosso Fiorentino, Parmigianino and Raphael's pupil, Giulio Romano.

Humanism

Humanism was an intellectual movement embraced by scholars, writers, and civic leaders in 14th century Italy.

Learning Objectives

Assess how Humanism gave rise to the art of the Renasissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Humanists reacted against the utilitarian approach to education, seeking to create a citizenry who were able to speak and write with eloquence and thus able to engage the civic life of their communities.
- The movement was largely founded on the ideals of Italian scholar and poet Francesco Petrarca, which were often centered around humanity's potential for achievement.
- While Humanism initially began as a predominantly literary movement, its influence quickly pervaded the general culture of the time, reintroducing classical Greek and Roman art forms and leading to the Renaissance .
- Donatello became renowned as the greatest sculptor of the Early Renaissance, known especially for his Humanist, and unusually erotic, statue of David.
- While medieval society viewed artists as servants and craftspeople, Renaissance artists were trained intellectuals, and their art reflected this newfound point of view.
- In humanist painting, the treatment of the elements of perspective and depiction of light became of particular concern.

Key Terms

- **High Renaissance**: The period in art history denoting the apogee of the visual arts in the Italian Renaissance. The High Renaissance period is traditionally thought to have begun in the 1490s—with Leonardo's fresco of The Last Supper in Milan and the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence—and to have ended in 1527, with the Sack of Rome by the troops of Charles V.

Overview

Humanism, also known as Renaissance Humanism, was an intellectual movement embraced by scholars, writers, and civic leaders in 14th- and early-15th-century Italy. The movement developed in response to the medieval scholastic conventions in education at the time, which emphasized practical, pre-professional, and scientific studies engaged in solely for job preparation, and typically by men alone. Humanists reacted against this utilitarian approach, seeking to create a citizenry who were able to speak and write with eloquence and thus able to engage the civic life of their communities. This was to be accomplished through the study of the "*studia humanitatis*," known today as the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy. Humanism introduced a program to revive the cultural—and particularly the literary—legacy and moral philosophy of classical antiquity . The movement was largely founded on the ideals of Italian scholar and poet Francesco Petrarca, which were often centered around humanity's potential for achievement.

While Humanism initially began as a predominantly literary movement, its influence quickly pervaded the general culture of the time, re-introducing classical Greek and Roman art forms and contributing to the development of the Renaissance. Humanists considered the ancient world to be the pinnacle of human achievement, and thought its accomplishments should serve as the model for contemporary Europe. There were important centers of Humanism in Florence, Naples, Rome , Venice , Genoa, Mantua, Ferrara, and Urbino .

Humanism was an optimistic philosophy that saw man as a rational and sentient being, with the ability to decide and think for himself. It saw man as inherently good by nature, which was in tension with the Christian view of man as the original sinner needing redemption. It provoked fresh insight into the nature of reality, questioning beyond God and spirituality, and provided knowledge about history beyond Christian history.

Humanist Art

Renaissance Humanists saw no conflict between their study of the Ancients and Christianity. The lack of perceived conflict allowed Early Renaissance artists to combine classical forms, classical themes, and Christian theology freely. Early Renaissance sculpture is a great vehicle to explore the emerging Renaissance style . The leading artists of this medium were Donatello, Filippo Brunelleschi, and Lorenzo Ghiberti. Donatello became renowned as the greatest sculptor of the Early Renaissance, known especially for his classical, and unusually erotic, statue of David, which became one of the icons of the Florentine republic.

Donatello's *David*: Donatello's *David* is regarded as an iconic Humanist work of art.

Humanism affected the artistic community and how artists were perceived. While medieval society viewed artists as servants and craftspeople, Renaissance artists were trained intellectuals, and their art reflected this newfound point of view. Patronage of the arts became an important activity, and commissions included secular subject matter as well as religious. Important patrons , such as Cosimo de' Medici, emerged and contributed largely to the expanding artistic production of the time.

In painting, the treatment of the elements of perspective and light became of particular concern. Paolo Uccello, for example, who is best known for “The Battle of San Romano,” was obsessed by his interest in perspective, and would stay up all night in his study trying to grasp the exact vanishing point . He used perspective in order to create a feeling of depth in his paintings. In addition, the use of oil paint had its beginnings in the early part of the 16th century, and its use continued to be explored extensively throughout the High Renaissance .

“The Battle of San Romano” by Paolo Uccello: Italian Humanist paintings were largely concerned with the depiction of perspective and light.

Origins

Some of the first Humanists were great collectors of antique manuscripts, including Petrarch, Giovanni Boccaccio, Coluccio Salutati, and Poggio Bracciolini. Of the three, Petrarch was dubbed the “Father of Humanism” because of his devotion to Greek and Roman scrolls. Many worked for the organized church and were in holy orders (like Petrarch), while others were lawyers and chancellors of Italian cities (such as Petrarch’s disciple Salutati, the Chancellor of Florence) and thus had access to book-copying workshops.

In Italy, the Humanist educational program won rapid acceptance and, by the mid-15th century, many of the upper classes had received Humanist educations, possibly in addition to traditional scholastic ones. Some of the highest officials of the church were Humanists with the resources to amass important libraries. Such was Cardinal Basilios Bessarion, a convert to the Latin church from Greek Orthodoxy, who was considered for the papacy and was one of the most learned scholars of his time.

Following the Crusader sacking of Constantinople and the end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the migration of Byzantine Greek scholars and émigrés, who had greater familiarity with ancient languages and works, furthered the revival of Greek and Roman literature and science.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Italian Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance_painting. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sandro Botticelli - La nascita di Venere - Google Art Project - edited. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sandro_Botticelli_-_La_nascita_di_Venere_-_Google_Art_Project_-_edited.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Marriage of the Virgin (Raphael). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Marriage_of_the_Virgin_(Raphael). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Birth of Venus (Botticelli). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Birth_of_Venus_(Botticelli). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sfumato. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sfumato. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Uccello Battle of San Romano Uffizi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Uccello_Battle_of_San_Romano_Uffizi.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Donatello - David - Florenu00e7a. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Donatello_-_David_-_Floren%C3%A7a.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paolo Uccello. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paolo_Uccello. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- David (Donatello). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/David_(Donatello). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Battle of San Romano. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Battle_of_San_Romano. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Humanism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- High Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/High%20Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 19.1: The Italian Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

19.2: Renaissance Architecture

Renaissance Architecture

During the High Renaissance, architectural concepts derived from classical antiquity were developed and used with greater surety.

Learning Objectives

Name some distinguishing features of Italian Renaissance architecture, its major exponents, and important architectural concepts

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Renaissance architecture adopted distinguishing features of classical Roman architecture. However, the forms and purposes of buildings had changed over time, as had the structure of cities, which is reflected in the fusion of classical and 16th century forms.
- The primary features of 16th century structures, which fused classical Roman technique with Renaissance aesthetics , were based in several foundational architectural concepts: facades, columns and pilasters , arches , vaults , domes , windows, and walls.
- Although studying and mastering the details of the ancient Romans was one of the important aspects of Renaissance architectural theory, the style also became more decorative and ornamental, with a widespread use of statuary, domes, and cupolas.

Key Terms

- **pediment**: A classical architectural element consisting of a triangular section or gable found above the horizontal superstructure (entablature) which lies immediately upon the columns.
- **pilaster**: A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached; it gives the appearance of a support, but is only for decoration.
- **Renaissance Architecture**: Renaissance architecture is the architecture of the period between the early 15th and early 17th centuries in different regions of Europe, demonstrating a conscious revival and development of certain elements of ancient Greek and Roman thought and material culture. Stylistically, Renaissance architecture followed Gothic architecture and was succeeded by Baroque architecture.

Background

Renaissance architecture is European architecture between the early 15th and early 17th centuries. It demonstrates a conscious revival and development of certain elements of classical thought and material culture , particularly symmetry and classical orders. Stylistically, Renaissance architecture came after the Gothic period and was succeeded by the Baroque . During the High Renaissance , architectural concepts derived from classical antiquity were developed and used with greater surety.

The most representative architect of Italian Renaissance Architecture is Bramante (1444–1514), who developed the applicability of classical architectural elements to contemporary buildings, a style that was to dominate Italian architecture in the 16th century. In the late 15th century and early 16th century architects such as Bramante, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, and others showed a mastery of the revived style and ability to apply it to buildings such as churches and city palazzos, which were quite different from the structures of ancient times. Although studying and mastering the details of the ancient Romans was one of the important aspects of Renaissance architectural theory, the style also became more decorative and ornamental, with a widespread use of statuary, domes, and cupolas.

Forms and Purposes of Buildings

Renaissance architecture adopted obvious distinguishing features of classical Roman architecture. However, the forms and purposes of buildings had changed over time, as had the structure of cities, which is reflected in the resulting fusion of classical and 16th century forms. The plans of Renaissance buildings typically have a square, symmetrical appearance in which proportions are

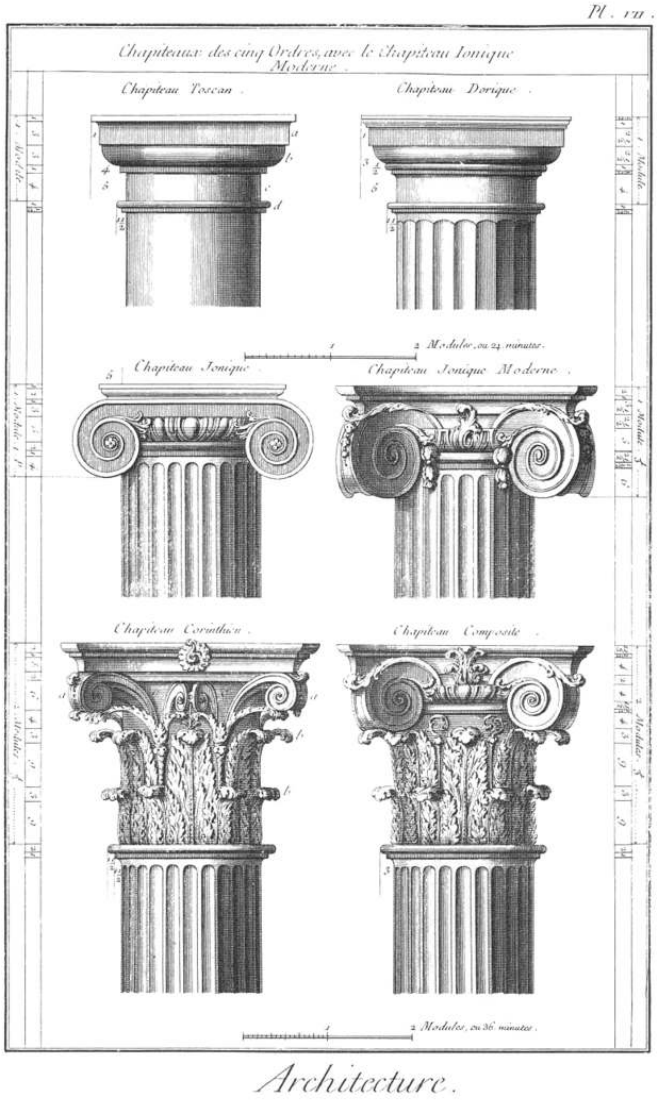
usually based on a module. The primary features of 16th century structures, which fused classical Roman technique with Renaissance aesthetics, were based in several foundational architectural concepts: facades, columns and pilasters, arches, vaults, domes, windows, and walls.

Foundational Architectural Concepts

Renaissance façades are symmetrical around their vertical axis. For instance, church façades of this period are generally surmounted by a pediment and organized by a system of pilasters, arches, and entablatures . The columns and windows show a progression towards the center. One of the first true Renaissance façades was the Cathedral of Pienza (1459–62), which has been attributed to the Florentine architect Bernardo Gambarelli (known as Rossellino).

Cathedral of Pienza: This Cathedral demonstrates one of the first true Renaissance façades.

Renaissance architects also incorporated columns and pilasters, using the Roman orders of columns (Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite) as models. The orders can either be structural, supporting an arcade or architrave , or purely decorative, set against a wall in the form of pilasters. During the Renaissance, architects aimed to use columns, pilasters, and entablatures as an integrated system. One of the first buildings to use pilasters as an integrated system was the Old Sacristy (1421–1440) by Brunelleschi.



Classical Roman Columns: Orders of Architecture in the Greek Columns

The dome is used frequently in this period, both as a very large structural feature that is visible from the exterior, and also as a means of roofing smaller spaces where they are only visible internally. Domes were used in important structures such as the Pantheon during antiquity, but had been used only rarely in the Middle Ages . After the success of the dome in Brunelleschi's design for the Florence Cathedral and its use in Bramante's plan for St. Peter's Basilica in Rome , the dome became an indispensable element in Renaissance church architecture and carried over to the Baroque.

Dome of St. Peter's Basilica: The Dome of St Peter's Basilica, Rome is often cited as a foundational piece of Renaissance architecture.

Windows may be paired and set within a semicircular arch and may have square lintels and triangular or segmental pediments, which are often used alternately. Emblematic in this respect is the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, begun in 1517. In the Mannerist period, the "Palladian" arch was employed, using a motif of a high semicircular topped opening flanked with two lower square-topped openings. Windows were used to bring light into the building and in domestic architecture, to show the view. Stained glass, although sometimes present, was not a prevalent feature in Renaissance windows.

Palazzo Farnese: The Palazzo Farnese in Rome demonstrates the Renaissance window's particular use of square lintels and triangular and segmental pediments used alternatively.

Finally, external Renaissance walls were generally of highly finished ashlar masonry, laid in straight courses . The corners of buildings were often emphasized by rusticated quoins. Basements and ground floors were sometimes rusticated, as modeled on the Palazzo Medici Riccardi (1444–1460) in Florence. Internal walls were smoothly plastered and surfaced with white chalk paint. For more formal spaces, internal surfaces were typically decorated with frescoes .

Palazzo Medici Riccardi: Rusticated stone walls of the Renaissance Palazzo Medici Riccardi

Renaissance Architecture in Florence

Renaissance architecture first developed in Florence in the 15th century and represented a conscious revival of classical styles.

Learning Objectives

Define the importance and specific style of 15th century Florentine architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Renaissance style of architecture emerged in Florence not as a slow evolution from preceding styles, but rather as a conscious development put into motion by architects seeking to revive the golden age of classical antiquity .
- The Renaissance style eschewed the complex proportional systems and irregular profiles of Gothic structures, and placed emphasis on symmetry , proportion, geometry, and regularity of parts.
- 15th century architecture in Florence featured the use of classical elements such as orderly arrangements of columns , pilasters , lintels , semicircular arches , and hemispherical domes .
- Filippo Brunelleschi was the first to develop a true Renaissance architecture.
- While the enormous brick dome that covers the central space of the Florence Cathedral used Gothic technology, it was the first dome erected since classical Rome and became a ubiquitous feature in Renaissance churches.
- The buildings of the early Renaissance in Florence expressed a new sense of light, clarity, and spaciousness that reflected the enlightenment and clarity of mind glorified by the philosophy of Humanism .

Key Terms

- **quattrocento**: Term that denotes the 1400s, which may also be referred to as the 15th century Renaissance Italian period.
- **entablature**: The part of a classical temple above the capitals of the columns; includes the architrave, frieze, and cornice but not the roof.

- **pilaster**: A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached; it gives the appearance of a support, but is only for decoration.

The Quattrocento , or the 15th century in Florence, was marked by the development of the Renaissance style of architecture, which represented a conscious revival and development of ancient Greek and Roman architectural elements. The rules of Renaissance architecture were first formulated and put into practice in 15th century Florence, whose buildings subsequently served as an inspiration to architects throughout Italy and Western Europe.

The Renaissance style of architecture emerged in Florence not as a slow evolution from preceding styles, but rather as a conscious development put into motion by architects seeking to revive a golden age. These architects were sponsored by wealthy patrons including the powerful Medici family and the Silk Guild , and approached their craft from an organized and scholarly perspective that coincided with a general revival of classical learning. The Renaissance style deliberately eschewed the complex proportional systems and irregular profiles of Gothic structures. Instead, Renaissance architects placed emphasis on symmetry, proportion, geometry, and regularity of parts as demonstrated in classical Roman architecture. They also made considerable use of classical antique features such as orderly arrangements of columns, pilasters, lintels, semicircular arches, and hemispherical domes.

The person generally credited with originating the Renaissance style of architecture is Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), whose first major commission—the enormous brick dome that covers the central space of the Florence Cathedral—was also perhaps architecturally the most significant. Known as the *Duomo,* the dome was engineered by Brunelleschi to cover a spanning in the already existing Cathedral. The dome retains the Gothic pointed arch and the Gothic ribs in its design. The dome is structurally influenced by the great domes of Ancient Rome such as the Pantheon , and it is often described as the first building of the Renaissance. The dome is made of red brick and was ingeniously constructed without supports, using a deep understanding of the laws of physics and mathematics. It remains the largest masonry dome in the world and was such an unprecedented success at its time that the dome became an indispensable element in church and even secular architecture thereafter.

Duomo of Florence: The Florence Cathedral is the first example of a true dome in Renaissance architecture.

Another key figure in the development of Renaissance architecture in Florence was Leon Battista Alberti (1402—1472), an important Humanist theoretician and designer, whose book on architecture *De re aedificatoria* was the first architectural treatise of the Renaissance. Alberti designed two of Florence's best known 15th century buildings: the Palazzo Rucellai and the facade of the church of Santa Maria Novella. The Palazzo Rucellai, a palatial townhouse built 1446–51, typified the newly developing features of Renaissance architecture, including a classical ordering of columns over three levels and the use of pilasters and entablatures in proportional relationship to each other.

Palazzo Rucellai, Florence: Designed by Leon Battista Alberti between 1446–1451.

The facade of Santa Maria Novella (1456–70) also showed similar Renaissance innovations based on classical Roman architecture. Alberti attempted to bring the ideals of humanist architecture and proportion to the already existing structure while creating harmony with the existing medieval facade. His contributions included a classically inspired frieze decorated with squares, four white-green pilasters, and a round window crowned by a pediment with the Dominican solar emblem and flanked on both sides by S-shaped scrolls. While the pediment and the frieze were inspired by classical architecture, the scrolls were new and without precedent in antiquity, and ended up becoming a very popular architectural feature in churches all over Italy.

Santa Maria Novella: Façade of Santa Maria Novella church in Florence, designed by Alberti

The buildings of the early Renaissance in Florence expressed a new sense of light, clarity, and spaciousness that reflected the enlightenment and clarity of mind glorified by the philosophy of Humanism.

Renaissance Architecture in Rome

Rome, the second Renaissance capital after Florence, was one of the most important architectural and cultural centers during this period.

Learning Objectives

Identify features and the most important examples of Roman Renaissance architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Roman Renaissance architects derived their main designs and inspirations from Roman and Greek classical models.
- Donato Bramante (1444–1514) was a key figure in Roman architecture during the High Renaissance .
- The Palazzo Farnese, one of the most important High Renaissance palaces in Rome , is a primary example of Renaissance Roman architecture.

Key Terms

- **Rome**: A city, the capital of the province of Latium and the seat of the Holy See during the Renaissance.

Rome is widely regarded by scholars as the second Renaissance capital of Italy, after Florence, and was one of the most important architectural and cultural centers during this period. Roman Renaissance architects derived their main designs and inspirations from classical models. The style of Roman Renaissance architecture does not greatly differ from what may be observed in Florence Renaissance architecture. However, patrons in Rome tended to be important officials of the Catholic Church, and buildings are generally religious or palatial in function.

Donato Bramante (1444—1514) was a key figure in Roman architecture during the High Renaissance. Bramante was born in Urbino and first came to prominence as an architect in Milan before traveling to Rome. In Rome, Bramante was commissioned by Ferdinand and Isabella to design the Tempietto, a temple that marks what was believed to be the exact spot where Saint Peter was martyred. The temple is circular, similar to early Christian martyriums, and much of the design is inspired by the remains of the ancient Temple Vesta. The Tempietto is considered by many scholars to be the premier example of High Renaissance architecture. With its perfect proportions, harmony of parts, and direct references to ancient architecture, the Tempietto embodies the Renaissance. This structure has been described as Bramante's "calling card" to Pope Julius II, the important Renaissance patron of the arts who would then employ Bramante in the historic design of the new St. Peter's Basilica .

The Tempietto, c. 1502, Rome, Italy. : Designed by Donato Bramante, the Tempietto is considered the premier example of High Renaissance architecture.

Another primary example of Renaissance Roman architecture includes the Palazzo Farnese, one of the most important High Renaissance palaces in Rome. First designed in 1517 for the Farnese family, the building expanded in size and conception from designs by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger when Alessandro Farnese became Pope Paul III in 1534. Its building history involved some of the most prominent Italian architects of the 16th century, including Michelangelo, Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, and Giacomo della Porta. Key Renaissance architectural features of the main facade include the alternating triangular and segmental pediments that cap the windows of the piano nobile, the central rusticated portal, and Michelangelo's projecting cornice , which throws a deep shadow on the top of the facade. Michelangelo revised the central window in 1541, adding an architrave to give a central focus to the facade, above which is the largest papal stemma, or coat-of-arms with papal tiara, Rome had ever seen.

Palazzo Farnese: The Palazzo Farnese in Rome demonstrates the Renaissance window's particular use of square lintels and triangular and segmental pediments used alternatively.

The Palazzo Farnese courtyard, initially open arcades , is ringed by classically inspired columns (characteristic of Italian Renaissance architecture), in ascending orders (Doric, Corinthian, and Ionic). The piano nobile entablature was given a frieze with garlands, added by Michelangelo. On the garden side of the palace, which faced the River Tiber, Michelangelo proposed the innovatory design of a bridge which, if completed, would have linked the palace with the gardens of the Vigna Farnese. While the practicalities of achieving this bridge remained dubious, the idea was a bold and expansive one. During the 16th century, two large granite basins from the Baths of Caracalla were adapted as fountains in the Piazza Farnese, the urban face of the palace. The palazzo was completed for the second Cardinal Alessandro Farnese by Giacomo della Porta's porticoed facade towards the Tiber (finished in 1589). Following the death of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese in 1626, the palazzo stood virtually uninhabited for 20 years.

Renaissance Architecture in Venice

In the Veneto, the Renaissance ushered in a new era of architecture after a Gothic phase, which drew on classical Roman and Greek motifs.

Learning Objectives

Describe the style of Venetian architecture during the Renaissance, and of Palladio in particular

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architecture in Venice and the Veneto was largely based on the work of Andrea Palladio, who designed and completed some highly influential works, including Villas in the mainland, Vicenza, Padua, and Treviso.
- Palladian architecture , in masterpieces such as Villa Emo, Villa Barbaro, Villa Capra, and Villa Foscari, evoked the imagined grandeur of antique classical Roman villas.
- Palladio created an architectural movement called Palladianism, which had a strong following in the next three centuries, inspiring a new generation of architects who completed several works that echo Palladio's aestheticism, including the first Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza.

Key Terms

- **Venice**: A maritime city and associated province in the Veneto, Italy.
- **Veneto**: A region of northern Italy.
- **Palladian Architecture**: Palladian architecture is a European style of architecture derived from the designs of the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). The term "Palladian" normally refers to buildings in a style inspired by Palladio's own work; what is recognized as Palladian architecture today is an evolution of Palladio's original concepts.

Venice, the capital of the Veneto, has a rich and diverse architectural style , the most famous of which is the Gothic style. Venetian Gothic architecture is a term given to a Venetian building style combining use of the Gothic lancet arch with Byzantine and Ottoman influences. The style originated in 14thcentury Venice, where the confluence of Byzantine style from Constantinople met Arab influence from Moorish Spain. Chief examples of the style are the Doge's Palace and the Ca' d'Oro in the city. The city also has several Renaissance and Baroque buildings, including the Ca' Pesaro and the Ca' Rezzonico.

In the Venato, the Renaissance ushered in a new era of architecture after a phase of Gothic art, with the creation of important works including the Ca' d'Oro and the churches of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and of Saints John and Paul in Venice. This phase of architecture demonstrates how Gothic and Byzantine influences lingered much longer in Venice than they did in Florence or Rome during the Renaissance.

Ca' d'Oro: Ca' d'Oro façade overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice

Later architecture in Venice and the Veneto was largely based on the work of Andrea Palladio, who designed and completed some highly influential works, including villas in the mainland, Vicenza, Padua, and Treviso. In Venice, he designed the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore, the Il Redentore, and Zitelle on the island of Giudecca. Palladian architecture, in masterpieces such as Villa Emo, Villa Barbaro, Villa Capra, and Villa Foscari, evoked the imagined grandeur of antique classical Roman villas.

Villa Foscari: The front façade of the Villa Foscari features several neoclassical columns.

This aesthetic , established through Palladio's publications, proved very popular and underwent a revival in the neoclassical period. For instance, Palladian villas were designed so that the owner visibly exerted control over production activities of the surrounding countryside by structuring the functional parts, such as the porch, close to the central body. In the case of Villa Badoer, the open

barn, formed by a large circular colonnade enclosing the front yard in front of the villa, created a space that recalled the ancient idea of the Roman Forum , bringing all campaign activities to the front of the villa itself.

Palladio created an architectural movement called Palladianism, which had a strong following in the next three centuries. Palladianism inspired architects, some of them his direct students, including Vincenzo Scamozzi, who completed several works that echoed Palladio's aestheticism, including the first Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza.

Teatro Olimpico: Scaenae frons of the Teatro Olimpico. The permanent background is elaborately decorated, and the large arch in the center is known as the porta regia or "royal arch."

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Dom_Fassade3-_s.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pienza. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- GianoMediciRicardi.gif. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Medici_Riccardi. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Classical orders from the Encyclopedie. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Classical_orders_from_the_Encyclopedie.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Palais Farnese. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palais_Farnese.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- StPetersDomePD. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:StPetersDomePD.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Classical order. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_order. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture%23Characteristics_of_Renaissance_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture%23High_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance%20Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pediment. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pediment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pilaster. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pilaster. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hotel minerva, terrazza, veduta duomo 01. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hotel_minerva,_terrazza,_veduta_duomo_01.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palazzo_Rucellai.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Rucellai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Santa Maria Novella. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Maria_Novella.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- entablature. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/entablature. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palazzo Rucellai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Rucellai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Renaissance and Mannerist architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance_and_Mannerist_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Santa Maria Novella. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Maria_Novella. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Florentine Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Florentine_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duomo of Florence. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Duomo_of_Florence. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pilaster. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pilaster. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- entablature. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/entablature. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quattrocento. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quattrocento. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roma-tempiettobramante01R.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Pietro_in_Montorio#The_Tempietto. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Palais Farnese. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palais_Farnese.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance Architecture . **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- San Pietro in Montorio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Pietro_in_Montorio#The_Tempietto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palazzo Farnese, Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Farnese,_Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of Rome. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Rome%23Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rome. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ca' d'Oro facciata. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ca'_d'Oro_facciata.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Veneto Vicenza1 tango7174. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Veneto_Vicenza1_tango7174.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- VillaFoscari 2007 07 10 02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:VillaFoscari_2007_07_10_02.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ca' d'Oro. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ca%27_d%27Oro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Venice. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice%23Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palladian Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palladian%20Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Veneto. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Veneto%23Art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Veneto. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Veneto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Venice. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Venice. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 19.2: Renaissance Architecture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

19.3: Renaissance Sculpture

Renaissance Sculpture in Florence

Renaissance sculpture originated in Florence in the 15th century and was deeply influenced by classical sculpture.

Learning Objectives

Identify the impetus behind the sculptural output in 15th century Florence, its major exponents, and its best known works

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Renaissance sculpture proper is often thought to have begun with the famous competition for the doors of the Florence baptistry in 1403, which was won by Lorenzo Ghiberti.
- Ghiberti designed a set of doors for the competition, housed in the northern entrance, and another more splendid pair for the eastern entrance, named the Gates of Paradise. Both of these gates depict biblical scenes.
- Ghiberti set up a large workshop in which many famous Florentine sculptors and artists were trained. He revived the lost wax casting of bronze , a technique that had been used by the ancients and had subsequently been lost.
- Donatello created his bronze David for Cosimo de' Medici. Conceived independently of any architectural surroundings, it was the first known free-standing nude statue produced since antiquity .
- The period was marked by a great increase in patronage of sculpture by the state for public art and by wealthy patrons for their homes. Public sculpture became a crucial element in the appearance of historic city centers. Additionally, portrait sculpture, particularly busts, became hugely popular in Florence.

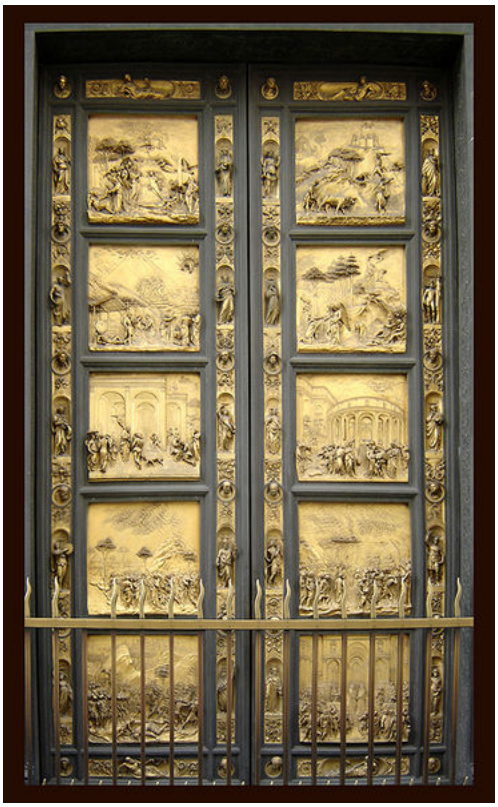
Key Terms

- **allegory**: The representation of abstract principles by characters or figures.
- **lost wax**: A method of casting a sculpture in which a model of the sculpture is made from wax: the model is used to make a mould; when the mould has set, the wax is made to melt and is poured away, leaving the mould ready to be used to cast the sculpture.
- **baptistry**: A designated space that may stand within a church as a separate room or even as a separate building associated with a church, where a baptismal font is located, and consequently, where the sacrament of Christian baptism (via aspersion or affusion) is performed. Typically during the Renaissance, baptisteries were separate buildings as people would be baptized before entering a church or Cathedral.

Commonly known as "the cradle of the Renaissance," 15th century Florence was among the largest and richest cities in Europe and its wealthiest residents were enthusiastic patrons of the arts, including sculpture. Departing from the International Gothic style that had previously dominated in Italy, and drawing from the styles of classical antiquity, Renaissance sculpture originated in Florence and was self-consciously influenced by ancient sculpture.

Lorenzo Ghiberti

Renaissance sculpture proper is often thought to begin with the famous competition for the doors of the Florence baptistery in 1403, from which the trial models submitted by the winner, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and the runner up, Filippo Brunelleschi, still survive. Ghiberti's bronze doors consist of 28 panels depicting scenes from the life of Christ, the four evangelists, and the Church Fathers Saints Ambrose, Jeromy, Gregory, and Augustine. They took 21 years to complete and still stand at the northern entrance of the baptistery, although they are eclipsed by the splendor of his second pair of gates for the eastern entrance, which Michelangelo dubbed "the gates of paradise." These new doors were commissioned in 1425 and built over a 27-year period. They consist of 10 rectangular panels depicting scenes from the Old Testament and employ a clever use of the recently discovered principles of perspective to add depth to the composition . They are surrounded by a richly decorated gilt framework of fruit and foliage, statuettes of prophets, and busts of the sculptor and his father.



Gates of Paradise, Florence Baptistry: Ghiberti's gates depicted scenes from the Old Testament at the eastern entrance of the Baptistry.

In order to carry out these huge commissions, Ghiberti set up a large workshop in which many famous Florentine sculptors and artists trained in later years, including Donatello, Michelozzo, and Paolo Uccello. He revived the lost wax casting of bronze, a technique which had been used by the ancients and subsequently lost. This made his workshop particularly famous and was a great draw for aspiring artists.

Donatello

Another deeply influential sculptor from Florence was Donatello (1386—1466), who is best known for his work in bas- relief , a form of shallow relief that he used as a medium for the incorporation of significant 15th century sculptural developments in perspectival illusion. Donatello received his early artistic training in a goldsmith's workshop and then trained briefly in Ghiberti's studio before undertaking a trip to Rome with Filippo Brunelleschi, where he undertook the study and excavation of Roman architecture and sculpture. Roman art became the single most important influence on Donatello's work. His foremost sponsor in Florence was Cosimo de'Medici, the city's greatest patron of art.

Donatello created his bronze David for Cosimo's court in the Palazzo Medici. Conceived entirely in the round and independent of any architectural surroundings, it was the first known free-standing nude statue produced since antiquity and represented an allegory of civic virtues overcoming brutality and ignorance. This sculpture represented a particularly important development in Renaissance sculpture: the production of sculpture independent of architecture, unlike the preceding International Gothic style where sculpture rarely existed independent of architecture.

David by Donatello: Donatello's genius made him an important figure in the early Italian Renaissance period. Sculpted between 1430–32, his bronze David is an example of his mature work. It is currently located in the Bargello Palace and Museum.

Donatello's other important projects in and near Florence include the marble pulpit of the facade of the Prato cathedral , the carved *Cantoria* or choir at the Florence Duomo, which was influenced by ancient sarcophagi and Byzantine ivory chests, the Annunciation scene for the Cavalcanti altar in the church of Santa Croce, and a bust of *Young Man with a Cameo*, the first example of a lay bust portrait since the classical era.

Patronage of Sculpture

The period was marked by a great increase in patronage of sculpture by the state for public art and by wealthy patrons for their homes. Public sculpture became a crucial element in the appearance of historic city centers, and portrait sculpture, particularly busts, became hugely popular in Florence following Donatello's innovations. These 15th century innovations soon spread throughout Italy and later through the rest of Europe.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Florence - David by Donatello. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Florence_-_David_by_Donatello.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Florenca146. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Florenca146.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lost wax. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lost_wax. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Donatello. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Donatello. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lorenzo Ghiberti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo_Ghiberti. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Scultura rinascimentale. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: it.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Scultura_rinascimentale. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- baptistry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/baptistry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- allegory. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/allegory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 19.3: Renaissance Sculpture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

19.4: Renaissance Painting

Renaissance Painting: Masaccio

Renaissance painting was developed in 15th century Florence when artists began to reject the flatness of Gothic painting and strive toward greater naturalism.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the important 15th century Florentine artists and the techniques they used

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Florentine painting received a new lease on life in the early 15th century, when the use of perspective was formalized by the architect Filippo Brunelleschi and adopted by painters as an artistic technique.
- Other important techniques developed in Florence during the first half of the 15th century include the use of realistic proportions, foreshortening , sfumato , and chiaroscuro .
- The artist most widely credited with first popularizing these techniques in 15th century Florence is Masaccio (1401–1428), the first great painter of the Quattrocento period of the Italian Renaissance .
- Masaccio was deeply influenced both by Giotto's earlier innovations in solidity of form and naturalism and Brunelleschi's formalized use of perspective in architecture and sculpture , and moved away from the International Gothic style to a more realistic mode.
- Masaccio is best known for his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, in which he employed techniques of linear perspective, such as the vanishing point for the first time, and had a profound influence on other artists despite the brevity of his career.

Key Terms

- **vanishing point**: The point in a perspective drawing at which parallel lines receding from an observer seem to converge.
- **quattrocento**: Renaissance Italian period during the 1400s.

Fifteenth century Florence was the birthplace of Renaissance painting, which rejected the flatness and stylized nature of Gothic art in order to focus on naturalistic representations of the human body and landscapes. While Giotto is often referred to as the herald of the Renaissance, there was a break in artistic developments in Italy after his death, due largely to the Black Death . However, Florentine painting was revitalized the early 15th century, when the use of perspective was formalized by the architect Filippo Brunelleschi and adopted by painters as an artistic technique. The development of perspective was part of a wider trend towards realism in the arts.

Many other important techniques commonly associated with Renaissance painting developed in Florence during the first half of the 15th century, including the use of realistic proportions, foreshortening (the artistic effect of shortening lines in a drawing to create the illusion of depth), sfumato (the blurring of sharp outlines by subtle and gradual blending to give the illusion of three-dimensionality), and chiaroscuro (the contrast between light and dark to convey a sense of depth).

The artist most widely credited with first pioneering these techniques in 15th century Florence is Masaccio (1401–1428), the first great painter of the Quattrocento period of the Italian Renaissance. Masaccio was deeply influenced by both Giotto's earlier innovations in solidity of form and naturalism and Brunelleschi's formalized use of perspective in architecture and sculpture. Masaccio is best known for his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, in which he employed techniques of linear perspective such as the vanishing point for the first time, and had a profound influence on other artists despite the brevity of his career.

Masaccio was friends with Brunelleschi and the sculptor Donatello, and collaborated frequently with the older and already renowned artist Masolino da Panicale (1383/4–1436) who traveled with him to Rome in 1423. From this point onwards, he eschewed the Byzantine and Gothic styles altogether, adopting traces of influence from ancient Greek and Roman art instead. These are evident in the cycle of frescoes he executed alongside Masolino for the Brancacci Chapel in the church of Santa Maria

del Carmine in Florence. The two artists started working on the chapel in 1425, but their work was completed by Filippo Lippi in the 1480s.

The frescoes in their entirety represent the story of human sin and redemption from the fall of Adam and Eve to the works of St. Peter. Giotto's influence is evident in Masaccio's frescoes, particularly in the weight and solidity of his figures and the vividness of their expressions. Unlike Giotto, Masaccio utilized linear and atmospheric perspective , and made even greater use of directional light and the chiaroscuro technique, enabling him to create even more convincingly lifelike paintings than his predecessor. His style and techniques became profoundly influential after his death and were imitated by his successors.

The Tribute Money, fresco in the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, 1425.: The Tribute Money is one of Masaccio's most famous frescoes from the Brancacci Chapel. Jesus and his apostles are depicted as neo-classical archetypes. The shadows of the figures fall away from the chapel window, as if the figures are lit by it; this is an added stroke of verisimilitude and shows Masaccio's innovative genius.

Renaissance Painting After Masaccio

After Masaccio's death Florentine artists built on his contributions to the use of perspective and light and shadow.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the contribution of Masaccio to Renaissance art and his influence on painters of the Florentine Quattrocento

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Florentine painting greatly increased in range and richness after Masaccio's death, and 15th century artists adopted his drive towards naturalism and his use of linear perspective , as well as the sfumato and chiaroscuro techniques.
- The most famous Florentine Quattrocento painters of the post-Masaccio period were Paolo Uccello, Piero della Francesca, and Filippo Lippi, who dedicated themselves to the study of light and shadow and perspective as their paramount concern.
- Piero della Francesca studied light and linear perspective from a scientific point of view and wrote treatises about his findings.
- Paolo Uccello used foreshortening to give his work depth and also made use of light, color, and contrast to add to the drama of his painting.

Key Terms

- **humanism**: Specifically, a cultural and intellectual movement prominent from the 14th to 16th centuries in Europe characterized by attention to classical culture and a promotion of vernacular texts, notably during the Renaissance.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **sfumato**: In painting, the application of subtle layers of translucent paint so that there is no visible transition between colors, tones, and often objects.

Masaccio is widely regarded as the first Renaissance painter of the Italian Quattrocento, and despite the brevity of his career, had the most profound influence on his successors. Florentine painting greatly increased in range and richness after Masaccio's death. Fifteenth century artists adopted and built on the style and techniques that he had introduced to Italian painting, most notably the

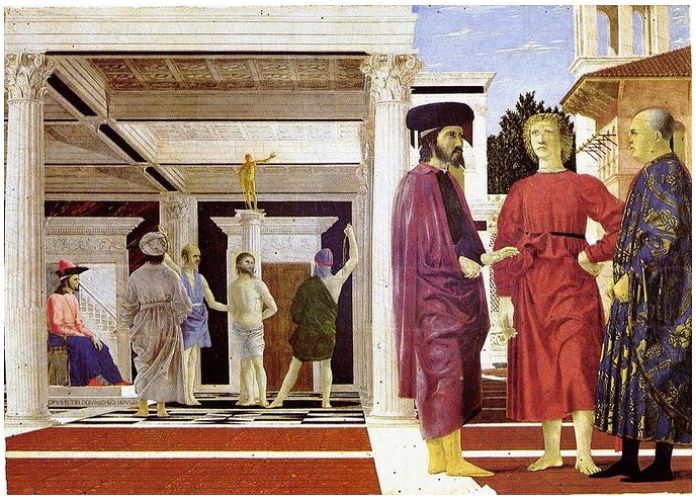
drive towards naturalism and the use of linear perspective, sfumato, and chiaroscuro. Artists also began to focus even more on proportional and anatomically accurate representations of the human body and naturalistic landscapes.

Some of the most well known Florentine Quattrocento painters of the post-Masaccio period were Paolo Uccello (1397–1475), Piero della Francesca (1415–1492), and Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–1469). These painters dedicated themselves to the study of light and shadow and perspective as their paramount concern. Paolo Uccello was said to be so obsessed with trying to achieve the appearance of perspective by grasping the exact vanishing point that it disturbed his sleep. Piero della Francesca studied light and linear perspective from a scientific point of view and wrote treatises about his findings. These artists are usually referred to as the "Perfect Artists" for their precise and technical use of perspective in their works.

Paolo Uccello's paintings emphasized color and pageantry rather than strictly classical realism , and he used perspective to convey a feeling of depth rather than to narrate different or succeeding stories as his contemporaries did. He is best known for his three egg tempera on wood paintings representing the Battle of San Romano, which use broken weapons on the ground and fields on the distant hills to show of his perfect employment of perspective and play of the idea of the checkerboard floor. Paolo Uccello also used light and contrast for dramatic effect in some of his almost monochrome frescoes , enlivening *terra verde* or "green earth" compositions with touches of bright vermilion. The best known is his equestrian portrait of John Hawkwood in the Florence Cathedral , which gives the impression of being lit by natural light as if the light source was an actual window in the cathedral.

Niccolò Mauruzi da Tolentino at the Battle of San Romano by Paolo Uccello, 1438–1440: In the foreground of this energetic and colorful battle scene, broken lances and a dead soldier are carefully aligned so as to show off the artist's perfect employment of perspective.

Piero della Francesca is well known for his fresco paintings including the cycle of frescoes depicting the Legend of the True Cross. His paintings are characterized by its serene humanism and its use of geometric forms in addition to his close attention to perspective. His *Flagellation of Christ* demonstrates his mastery over linear perspective and his knowledge of how light is proportionally disseminated from its point of origin. The artist also includes a checkerboard floor in this work to show off his perfect use of perspective. There are two light sources in the painting, one inside the building and the other from outside. While the light source inside the building is invisible, its position can be calculated with mathematical certainty from the rest of the composition, demonstrating his intimate understanding of the science of light.



The Flagellation of Christ by Piero della Francesca, 1460: The Flagellation of Christ demonstrates Piero della Francesca's control over both perspective and light.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Masaccio7. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Masaccio7.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- vanishing point. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vanishing_point. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Masaccio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Masaccio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quattrocento. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quattrocento. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Piero della Francesca 042 Flagellation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Piero_della_Francesca_042_Flagellation.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/9/98/San_Romano_Battle_(Paolo_Uccello,_London)_01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Italian Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- humanism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/humanism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sfumato. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sfumato. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 19.4: Renaissance Painting is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

19.5: The High Renaissance

The High Renaissance

The High Renaissance refers to a short period of exceptional artistic production in the Italian states.

Learning Objectives

Describe the different periods and characteristic styles of 16th century Italian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Many art historians consider the High Renaissance to be largely dominated by three individuals: Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci.
- Mannerism , which emerged in the latter years of the Italian High Renaissance, is notable for its intellectual sophistication and its artificial (as opposed to naturalistic) qualities, such as elongated proportions, stylized poses, and lack of clear perspective .
- Some historians regard Mannerism as a degeneration of High Renaissance classicism, or even as an interlude between High Renaissance and Baroque —in which case the dates are usually from c. 1520 to 1600 and it is considered a positive style complete in and of itself.

Key Terms

- **High Renaissance**: The period in art history denoting the apogee of the visual arts in the Italian Renaissance. The High Renaissance period is traditionally taken to have begun in the 1490s, with Leonardo's fresco of The Last Supper in Milan and the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, and to have ended in 1527, with the Sack of Rome by the troops of Charles V.
- **Mannerism**: A style of art developed at the end of the High Renaissance, characterized by the deliberate distortion and exaggeration of perspective, especially the elongation of figures.

High Renaissance Art

High Renaissance art was the dominant style in Italy during the 16th century. Mannerism also developed during this period. The High Renaissance period is traditionally taken to begin in the 1490s, with Leonardo's fresco of *TheLast Supper* in Milan, and to end in 1527, with the Sack of Rome by the troops of Charles V. This term was first used in German ("Hochrenaissance") in the early 19th century. Over the last 20 years, use of the term has been frequently criticized by academic art historians for oversimplifying artistic developments, ignoring historical context, and focusing only on a few iconic works.

High Renaissance art is deemed as "High" because it is seen as the period in which the artistic aims and goals of the Renaissance reached their greatest application. High Renaissance art is characterized by references to classical art and delicate application of developments from the Early Renaissance (such as on-point perspective). Overall, works from the High Renaissance display restrained beauty where all of the parts are subordinate to the cohesive composition of the whole.

Many consider 16th century High Renaissance art to be largely dominated by three individuals: Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci. Michelangelo excelled as a painter, architect, and sculptor and demonstrated a mastery of portraying the human figure. His frescoes rank among the greatest works of Renaissance art. Raphael was skilled in creating perspective and in the delicate use of color. Leonardo da Vinci painted two of the most well known works of Renaissance art: *The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo da Vinci was a generation older than Michelangelo and Raphael, yet his work is stylistically consistent with the High Renaissance.

The Last Supper, 1495–1498, Leonardo da Vinci

Mannerism

Mannerism is an artistic style that emerged from the later years of the 16th century and lasted as a popular aesthetic style in Italy until about 1580, when the Baroque began to replace it (although Northern Mannerism continued into the early 17th century throughout much of Europe). Michelangelo's later works, such as *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel , and the Laurentian Library, are considered to be Mannerist style by some art historians.

Last Judgment, 1536-1541, Michelangelo

Some historians regard Mannerism as a degeneration of High Renaissance classicism, or even as an interlude between High Renaissance and Baroque—in which case the dates are usually from c. 1520 to 1600 and it is considered a positive style complete in and of itself. The definition of Mannerism, and the phases within it, continues to be the subject of debate among art historians. For example, some scholars have applied the label to certain early modern forms of literature (especially poetry) and music of the 16th and 17th centuries. The term is also used to refer to some Late Gothic painters working in northern Europe from about 1500 to 1530, especially the Antwerp Mannerists, a group unrelated to the Italian movement. Mannerist art is characterized by elongated forms, contorted poses, and irrational settings.

Painting in the High Renaissance

The term "High Renaissance" denotes a period of artistic production that is viewed by art historians as the height, or the culmination, of the Renaissance period.

Learning Objectives

Describe the key factors that contributed to the development of High Renaissance painting and the period's stylistic features

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The High Renaissance was centered in Rome , and lasted from about 1490 to 1527, the end of the period marked by the Sack of Rome .
- The restrained beauty of a High Renaissance painting is created when all of the parts and details of the work support the cohesive whole.
- The prime example of High Renaissance painting is *The School of Athens* by Raphael.

Key Terms

- **High Renaissance**: A period of artistic production that is viewed by art historians as the height, or the culmination, of the Renaissance period. The period is dated from 1490–1527.

The High Renaissance

The term “High Renaissance” denotes a period of artistic production that is viewed by art historians as the height, or the culmination, of the Renaissance period. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael are considered High Renaissance painters. While the term has become controversial, with some scholars arguing that it oversimplifies artistic developments and historical context, it is hard to ignore the works of these High Renaissance artists as they remain so iconic even into the 21st century.

High Renaissance Style

The High Renaissance was centered in Rome, and lasted from about 1490 to 1527, with the end of the period marked by the Sack of Rome. Stylistically, painters during this period were influenced by classical art, and their works were harmonious. The restrained beauty of a High Renaissance painting is created when all of the parts and details of the work support the cohesive whole. While earlier Renaissance artists would stress the perspective of a work, or the technical aspects of a painting, High Renaissance artists were willing to sacrifice technical principles in order to create a more beautiful, harmonious whole. The factors that contributed to the development of High Renaissance painting were twofold. Traditionally, Italian artists had painted in tempera paint. During the High Renaissance, artists began to use oil paints, which are easier to manipulate and allow the artist to create softer forms . Additionally, the number and diversity of patrons increased, which allowed for greater development in art.

If Rome was the center for the High Renaissance, its greatest patron was Pope Julius II. As patron of the arts, Pope Julius II supported many important artists, including Michelangelo and Raphael. The prime example of High Renaissance painting is *The School of Athens* by Raphael.

The School of Athens, Raphael, 1509–1511: *The School of Athens*, painted by Raphael between 1509 and 1511, represents the style of High Renaissance painting that was centered in Rome during this period.

Raphael was commissioned by Pope Julius II to redecorate the Pope's living space in Rome. As part of this project, Raphael was asked to paint in the Pope's library, or the Stanza della Segnatura. *The School of Athens* is one of the frescoes within this room. The fresco represents the subject of philosophy and is consistently pointed to as the epitome of High Renaissance painting. The work demonstrates many key points of the High Renaissance style; references to classical antiquity are paramount as Plato and Aristotle are the central figures of this work. There is a clear vanishing point , demonstrating Raphael's command of technical aspects that were so important in Renaissance painting. But above all, the numerous figures in the work show restrained beauty and serve to support the harmonious, cohesive work. While the figures are diverse and dynamic, nothing serves to detract from the painting as a whole.

Sculpture in the High Renaissance

Sculpture in the High Renaissance demonstrates the influence of classical antiquity and ideal naturalism.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of High Renaissance sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Sculptors during the High Renaissance were deliberately quoting classical precedents and they aimed for ideal naturalism in their works.
- Michelangelo (1475–1564) is the prime example of a sculptor during the Renaissance; his works best demonstrate the goals and ideals of the High Renaissance sculptor.

During the Renaissance, an artist was not just a painter, or an architect, or a sculptor. They were typically all three. As a result, we see the same prominent names producing sculpture and the great Renaissance paintings. Additionally, the themes and goals of High Renaissance sculpture are very much the same as High Renaissance painting. Sculptors during the High Renaissance were deliberately quoting classical precedents and they aimed for ideal naturalism in their works. Michelangelo (1475–1564) is the prime example of a sculptor during the Renaissance; his works best demonstrate the goals and ideals of the High Renaissance sculptor.

Bacchus

The *Bacchus* is Michelangelo's first recorded commission in Rome . The work is made of marble, it is life sized, and it is carved in the round . The sculpture is of the god of wine, who is holding a cup and appears drunk. The references to classical antiquity are clear in the subject matter, and the body of the god is based on the Apollo Belvedere, which Michelangelo would have seen while in Rome. Not only is the subject matter influenced by antiquity, but so are the artistic influences.

Bacchus by Michelangelo, 1496–97: Bacchus is Michelangelo's first recorded commission in Rome. The statue clearly demonstrates the classical influence that became so important to sculptors during the High Renaissance.

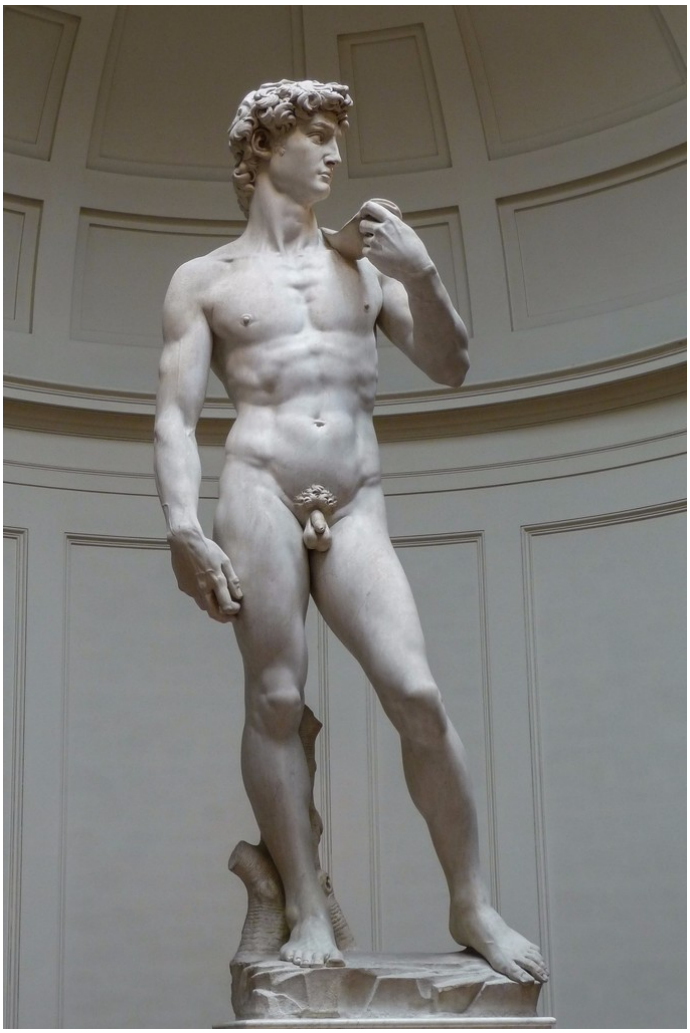
Pieta

While the *Pieta* is not based on classical antiquity in subject matter, the forms display the restrained beauty and ideal naturalism that was influenced by classical sculpture. Commissioned by a French Cardinal for his tomb in Old St. Peter's, it is the work that made Michelangelo's reputation. The subject matter of the Virgin cradling Christ after the crucifixion was uncommon in the Italian Renaissance, indicating that it was chosen by the patron .

Pieta by Michelangelo, 1498–9: This work by Michelangelo demonstrates the classical beauty and idealism that characterizes sculptures of the High Renaissance.

David

When the *David* was completed, it was intended to be a buttress on the back of the Florentine Cathedral . But Florentines during that time recognized it as so special and beautiful that they actually had a meeting about where to place the sculpture. Members of the group that met included the artists Leonardo da Vinci and Botticelli. What about this work made it stand out so spectacularly to Michelangelo's peers? The work demonstrates classical influence. The work is nude, in emulation of Greek and Roman sculptures, and the *David* stands in a contrapposto pose. He shows restrained beauty and ideal naturalism. Additionally, the work demonstrates an interest in psychology, which was new to the High Renaissance, as Michelangelo depicts David concentrating in the moments before he takes down the giant. The subject matter was also very special to Florence as David was traditionally a civic symbol. The work was ultimately placed in the Palazzo Vecchio and remains the prime example of High Renaissance sculpture.



David by Michelangelo, c.1504: This work by Michelangelo remains the prime example of High Renaissance sculpture.

Architecture in the High Renaissance

Architecture during the High Renaissance represents a culmination of the architectural developments that were made during the Renaissance.

Learning Objectives

Describe the important architects of the High Renaissance and their achievements

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Renaissance is divided into the Early Renaissance (c. 1400–1490) and the High Renaissance (c. 1490–1527).
- During the Early Renaissance, theories on art were developed, new advancements in painting and architecture were made, and the style was defined. The High Renaissance denotes a period that is seen as the culmination of the Renaissance period.
- Renaissance architecture is characterized by symmetry and proportion, and is directly influenced by the study of antiquity .
- The architects most representative of the High Renaissance are Donato Bramante (1444–1514) and Andrea Palladio (1508–1580).

The Renaissance is divided into the Early Renaissance (c. 1400–1490) and the High Renaissance (c. 1490–1527). During the Early Renaissance, theories on art were developed, new advancements in painting and architecture were made, and the style was defined.

The High Renaissance denotes a period that is seen as the culmination of the Renaissance period, when artists and architects implemented these ideas and artistic principles in harmonious and beautiful ways.

Renaissance architecture is characterized by symmetry and proportion, and is directly influenced by the study of antiquity. While Renaissance architecture was defined in the Early Renaissance by figures such as Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), the architects most representative of the High Renaissance are Donato Bramante (1444–1514) and Andrea Palladio (1508–1580).

Donato Bramante

A key figure in Roman architecture during the High Renaissance was Donato Bramante (1444–1514). Bramante was born in Urbino and first came to prominence as an architect in Milan before traveling to Rome . In Rome, Bramante was commissioned by Ferdinand and Isabella to design the Tempietto, a temple that marks what was believed to be the exact spot where Saint Peter was martyred. The temple is circular, similar to early Christian martyriums, and much of the design is inspired by the remains of the ancient Temple Vesta.

The Tempietto is considered by many scholars to be the premier example of High Renaissance architecture. With its perfect proportions, harmony of its parts, and direct references to ancient architecture, the Tempietto embodies the Renaissance. This structure has been described as Bramante's "calling card" to Pope Julius II, the important Renaissance patron of the arts who would then employ Bramante in the historic design of the new St. Peter's Basilica .

The Tempietto, c.1502, Rome, Italy: Designed by Donato Bramante, the Tempietto is considered the premier example of High Renaissance architecture.

Andrea Palladio

Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) was the Chief Architect in the Republic of Venice in the 16th century. Deeply inspired by Roman and Greek architecture, Palladio is widely considered one of the most influential individuals in the history of Western architecture. All of his buildings are located in what was the Venetian Republic, but his teachings, summarized in the architectural treatise, *The Four Books of Architecture*, gained him wide recognition beyond Italy. Palladian Architecture , named after him, adhered to classical

Roman principles that Palladio rediscovered, applied, and explained in his works. Palladio designed many palaces, villas, and churches, but his reputation has been founded on his skill as a designer of villas. Palladian villas are located mainly in the province of Vicenza.

Villas

Palladio established an influential new building format for the agricultural villas of the Venetian aristocracy. His designs were based on practicality and employed fewer reliefs . He consolidated the various standalone farm outbuildings into a single impressive structure and arranged as a highly organized whole, dominated by a strong center and symmetrical side wings, as illustrated at Villa Barbaro. The Palladian villa configuration often consists of a centralized block raised on an elevated podium, accessed by grand steps and flanked by lower service wings. This format, with the quarters of the owner at the elevated center of his own world, found resonance as a prototype for Italian villas and later for the country estates of the British nobility. Palladio developed his own more flexible prototype for the plan of the villas to moderate scale and function.

Villa Barbaro: Front of Villa Barbaro in Maser, province of Treviso, Italy, built by Andrea Palladio between 1554 and 1560 for the brothers Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro.

Leonardo da Vinci

While Leonardo da Vinci is admired as a scientist, an academic, and an inventor, he is most famous for his achievements as the painter of several Renaissance masterpieces.

Learning Objectives

Describe the works of Leonardo da Vinci that demonstrate his most innovative techniques as an artist

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Among the qualities that make da Vinci's work unique are the innovative techniques that he used in laying on the paint, his detailed knowledge of anatomy, his innovative use of the human form in figurative composition , and his use of sfumato .
- Among the most famous works created by da Vinci is the small portrait titled the *Mona Lisa*, known for the elusive smile on the woman's face, brought about by the fact that da Vinci subtly shadowed the corners of the mouth and eyes so that the exact nature of the smile cannot be determined.
- Despite his famous paintings, da Vinci was not a prolific painter; he was a prolific draftsman, keeping journals full of small sketches and detailed drawings recording all manner of things that interested him.

Key Terms

- **sfumato**: In painting, the application of subtle layers of translucent paint so that there is no visible transition between colors, tones, and often objects.

While Leonardo da Vinci is greatly admired as a scientist, an academic, and an inventor, he is most famous for his achievements as the painter of several Renaissance masterpieces. His paintings were groundbreaking for a variety of reasons and his works have been imitated by students and discussed at great length by connoisseurs and critics.

Among the qualities that make da Vinci's work unique are the innovative techniques that he used in laying on the paint, his detailed knowledge of anatomy, his use of the human form in figurative composition, and his use of sfumato. All of these qualities are present in his most celebrated works, the *Mona Lisa*, *The Last Supper*, and the *Virgin of the Rocks*.

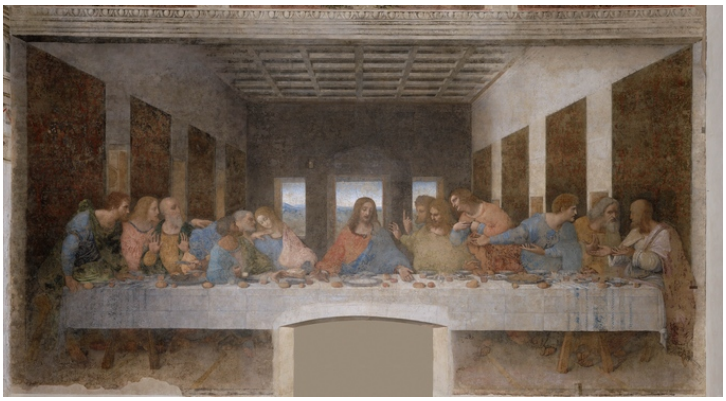
The Virgin of the Rocks, Leonardo da Vinci, 1483–1486: This painting shows the Madonna and Child Jesus with the infant John the Baptist and an angel, in a rocky setting.

The Last Supper

Da Vinci's most celebrated painting of the 1490s is *The Last Supper*, which was painted for the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria della Grazie in Milan. The painting depicts the last meal shared by Jesus and the 12 Apostles where he announces that one of the them will betray him. When finished, the painting was acclaimed as a masterpiece of design. This work demonstrates something that da Vinci did very well: taking a very traditional subject matter, such as the Last Supper, and completely re-inventing it.

Prior to this moment in art history, every representation of the Last Supper followed the same visual tradition: Jesus and the Apostles seated at a table. Judas is placed on the opposite side of the table of everyone else and is effortlessly identified by the viewer . When da Vinci painted The Last Supper he placed Judas on the same side of the table as Christ and the Apostles, who are shown reacting to Jesus as he announces that one of them will betray him. They are depicted as alarmed, upset, and trying to determine who will commit the act. The viewer also has to determine which figure is Judas, who will betray Christ. By depicting the scene in this manner, da Vinci has infused psychology into the work.

Unfortunately, this masterpiece of the Renaissance began to deteriorate immediately after da Vinci finished painting, due largely to the painting technique that he had chosen. Instead of using the technique of fresco , da Vinci had used tempera over a ground that was mainly gesso in an attempt to bring the subtle effects of oil paint to fresco. His new technique was not successful, and resulted in a surface that was subject to mold and flaking.

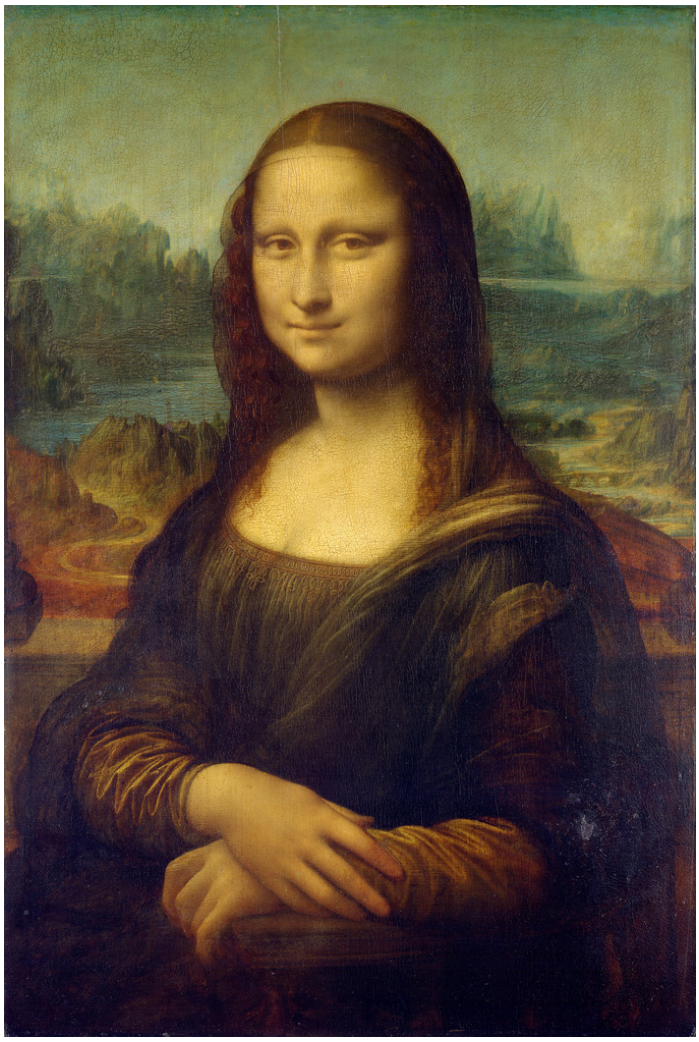


The Last Supper: Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, although much deteriorated, demonstrates the painter's mastery of the human form in figurative composition.

Mona Lisa

Among the works created by da Vinci in the 16th century is the small portrait known as the *Mona Lisa*, or *La Gioconda*, "the laughing one." In the present era it is arguably the most famous painting in the world. Its fame rests, in particular, on the elusive smile on the woman's face—its mysterious quality brought about perhaps by the fact that the artist has subtly shadowed the corners of the mouth and eyes so that the exact nature of the smile cannot be determined.

The shadowy quality for which the work is renowned came to be called sfumato, the application of subtle layers of translucent paint so that there is no visible transition between colors, tones , and often objects. Other characteristics found in this work are the unadorned dress, in which the eyes and hands have no competition from other details; the dramatic landscape background, in which the world seems to be in a state of flux; the subdued coloring; and the extremely smooth nature of the painterly technique, employing oils, but applied much like tempera and blended on the surface so that the brushstrokes are indistinguishable. And again, da Vinci is innovating upon a type of painting here. Portraits were very common in the Renaissance. However, portraits of women were always in profile, which was seen as proper and modest. Here, da Vinci present a portrait of a woman who not only faces the viewer but follows them with her eyes.



Mona Lisa: In the Mona Lisa, da Vinci incorporates his sfumato technique to create a shadowy quality.

Virgin and Child with St. Anne

In the painting *Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, da Vinci's composition again picks up the theme of figures in a landscape. What makes this painting unusual is that there are two obliquely set figures superimposed. Mary is seated on the knee of her mother, St. Anne. She leans forward to restrain the Christ Child as he plays roughly with a lamb, the sign of his own impending sacrifice . This painting influenced many contemporaries, including Michelangelo, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto. The trends in its composition were adopted in particular by the Venetian painters Tintoretto and Veronese.

Virgin and Child with Saint Anne: Virgin and Child with St. Anne (c. 1510) by Leonardo da Vinci, Louvre Museum.

Raphael

Raphael was an Italian Renaissance painter and architect whose work is admired for its clarity of form and ease of composition.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Raphael influences and artistic achievements

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Together with Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael forms the traditional trinity of great masters of the High Renaissance . He was enormously productive, running an unusually large workshop, and despite his death at 30, he had a large body of work.
- Some of Raphael's most striking artistic influences come from the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci; because of this inspiration, Raphael gave his figures more dynamic and complex positions in his earlier compositions .
- Raphael's "Stanze" masterpieces are very large and complex compositions that have been regarded among the supreme works of the High Renaissance. They give a highly idealized depiction of the forms represented, and the compositions, though very carefully conceived in drawings, achieve *sprezzatura* , the art of performing a task so gracefully it looks effortless.

Key Terms

- **sprezzatura**:The art of performing a difficult task so gracefully that it looks effortless.
- **loggia**:A roofed, open gallery.
- **contrapposto**:The position of a figure whose hips and legs are twisted away from the direction of the head and shoulders.

Overview

Raphael (1483–1520) was an Italian painter and architect of the High Renaissance. His work is admired for its clarity of form and ease of composition and for its visual achievement of the Neoplatonic ideal of human grandeur. Together with Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael forms the traditional trinity of great masters of that period. He was enormously productive, running an unusually large workshop; despite his death at 30, a large body of his work remains among the most famous of High Renaissance art.

Influences

Some of Raphael's most striking artistic influences come from the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci. In response to da Vinci's work, in some of Raphael's earlier compositions he gave his figures more dynamic and complex positions. For example, Raphael's *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (1507) borrows from the contrapposto pose of da Vinci's *Leda and the Swans*.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria: Saint Catherine of Alexandria (1507) borrows from the contrapposto pose of da Vinci's *Leda*.

While Raphael was also aware of Michelangelo's works, he deviates from his style . In his *Deposition of Christ*, Raphael draws on classical sarcophagi to spread the figures across the front of the picture space in a complex and not wholly successful arrangement.

The Deposition by Raphael, 1507: This painting depicts the body of Christ being carried and a woman fainting.

The Stanze Rooms and the Loggia

In 1511, Raphael began work on the famous Stanze paintings, which made a stunning impact on Roman art, and are generally regarded as his greatest masterpieces. The Stanza della Segnatura contains *The School of Athens*, *Poetry*, *Disputa*, and *Law*. *The School of Athens*, depicting Plato and Aristotle, is one of his best known works. These very large and complex compositions have been regarded ever since as among the supreme works of the High Renaissance, and the "classic art" of the post-antique West. They give a highly idealized depiction of the forms represented, and the compositions—though very carefully conceived in drawings—achieve *sprezzatura*, a term invented by Raphael's friend Castiglione, who defined it as "a certain nonchalance that conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless."

View of the Stanze della Segnatura, frescoes painted by Raphael

In the later phase of Raphael's career, he designed and painted the Loggia at the Vatican, a long thin gallery that was open to a courtyard on one side and decorated with Roman style grottesche. He also produced a number of significant altarpieces , including *The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia* and the *Sistine Madonna*. His last work, on which he was working until his death, was a large

Transfiguration which, together with *Il Spasimo*, shows the direction his art was taking in his final years, becoming more proto-Baroque than Mannerist .

The Master's studio

Raphael ran a workshop of over 50 pupils and assistants, many of whom later became significant artists in their own right. This was arguably the largest workshop team assembled under any single old master painter, and much higher than the norm. They included established masters from other parts of Italy, probably working with their own teams as sub-contractors, as well as pupils and journeymen.

Architecture

In architecture, Raphael's skills were employed by the papacy and wealthy Roman nobles. For instance, Raphael designed the plans for the the Villa Madama, which was to be a lavish hillside retreat for Pope Clement VII (and was never finished). Even incomplete, Raphael's schematic was the most sophisticated villa design yet seen in Italy, and greatly influenced the later development of the genre . It also appears to be the only modern building in Rome of which Palladio made a measured drawing.

Draftsman

Raphael was one of the finest draftsmen in the history of Western art, and used drawings extensively to plan his compositions. According to a near-contemporary, when beginning to plan a composition, he would lay out a large number of his stock drawings on the floor, and begin to draw "rapidly," borrowing figures from here and there. Over 40 sketches survive for the *Disputa* in the Stanze, and there may well have been many more originally (over 400 sheets survived altogether).

As evidenced in his sketches for the *Madonna and Child*, Raphael used different drawings to refine his poses and compositions, apparently to a greater extent than most other painters. Most of Raphael's drawings are rather precise—even initial sketches with naked outline figures are carefully drawn, and later drawings often have a high degree of finish, with shading and sometimes highlights in white. They lack the freedom and energy of some of da Vinci's and Michelangelo's sketches, but are almost always very satisfying aesthetically.

Raphael Sketch: This drawing shows Raphael's efforts in developing the composition for the *Madonna and Child*.

Michelangelo

Michelangelo was a 16th century Florentine artist renowned for his masterpieces in sculpture, painting, and architectural design.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Michelangelo's achievements in sculpture, painting, and architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Michelangelo created his colossal marble statue, the David, out of a single block of marble, which established his prominence as a sculptor of extraordinary technical skill and strength of symbolic imagination.
- In painting, Michelangelo is renowned for the ceiling and *The Last Judgement* of the Sistine Chapel , where he depicted a complex scheme representing Creation, the Downfall of Man, the Salvation of Man, and the Genealogy of Christ.
- Michelangelo's chief contribution to Saint Peter's Basilica was the use of a Greek Cross form and an external masonry of massive proportions, with every corner filled in by a stairwell or small vestry. The effect is a continuous wall-surface that appears fractured or folded at different angles.

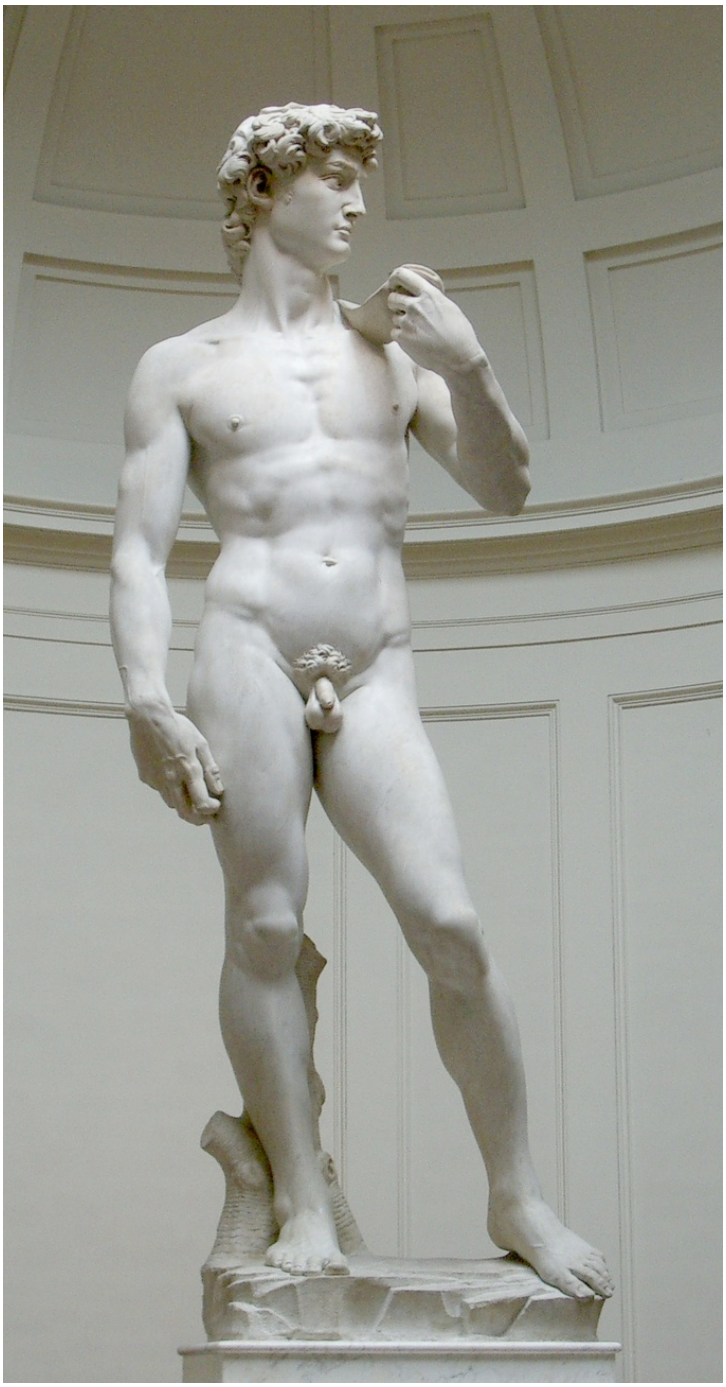
Key Terms

- **contrapposto**: The standing position of a human figure where most of the weight is placed on one foot, and the other leg is relaxed. The effect of contrapposto in art makes figures look very naturalistic.
- **Sistine Chapel**: The best-known chapel in the Apostolic Palace.

Michelangelo was a 16th century Florentine artist renowned for his masterpieces in sculpture, painting, and architectural design. His most well known works are the *David*, the *Last Judgment*, and the *Basilica of Saint Peter's* in the Vatican.

Sculpture: *David*

In 1504, Michelangelo was commissioned to create a colossal marble statue portraying David as a symbol of Florentine freedom. The subsequent masterpiece, *David*, established the artist's prominence as a sculptor of extraordinary technical skill and strength of symbolic imagination. *David* was created out of a single marble block, and stands larger than life, as it was originally intended to adorn the Florence Cathedral . The work differs from previous representations in that the Biblical hero is not depicted with the head of the slain Goliath, as he is in Donatello's and Verrocchio's statues; both had represented the hero standing victorious over the head of Goliath. No earlier Florentine artist had omitted the giant altogether. Instead of appearing victorious over a foe, David's face looks tense and ready for combat. The tendons in his neck stand out tautly, his brow is furrowed, and his eyes seem to focus intently on something in the distance. Veins bulge out of his lowered right hand, but his body is in a relaxed *contrapposto* pose, and he carries his sling casually thrown over his left shoulder. In the Renaissance , *contrapposto* poses were thought of as a distinctive feature of antique sculpture.



The David by Michelangelo, 1504: Michelangelo's David stands in contrapposto pose.

The sculpture was intended to be placed on the exterior of the Duomo, and has become one of the most recognized works of Renaissance sculpture.

Painting: *The Last Judgement*

In painting, Michelangelo is renowned for his work in the Sistine Chapel. He was originally commissioned to paint tromp-l'oeil coffers after the original ceiling developed a crack. Michelangelo lobbied for a different and more complex scheme, representing Creation, the Downfall of Man, the Promise of Salvation through the prophets, and the Genealogy of Christ. The work is part of a larger scheme of decoration within the chapel that represents much of the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

The composition eventually contained over 300 figures, and had at its center nine episodes from the Book of Genesis, divided into three groups: God's Creation of the Earth, God's Creation of Humankind, and their fall from God's grace, and lastly, the state of

Humanity as represented by Noah and his family. Twelve men and women who prophesied the coming of the Jesus are painted on the pendentives supporting the ceiling. Among the most famous paintings on the ceiling are The Creation of Adam, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Great Flood, the Prophet Isaiah and the Cumaean Sibyl. The ancestors of Christ are painted around the windows.

The fresco of *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel was commissioned by Pope Clement VII, and Michelangelo labored on the project from 1536–1541. The work is located on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, which is not a traditional placement for the subject. Typically, last judgement scenes were placed on the exit wall of churches as a way to remind the viewer of eternal punishments as they left worship. *The Last Judgment* is a depiction of the second coming of Christ and the apocalypse; where the souls of humanity rise and are assigned to their various fates, as judged by Christ, surrounded by the Saints. In contrast to the earlier figures Michelangelo painted on the ceiling, the figures in *The Last Judgement* are heavily muscled and are in much more artificial poses, demonstrating how this work is in the Mannerist style .

In this work Michelangelo has rejected the orderly depiction of the last judgement as established by Medieval tradition in favor of a swirling scene of chaos as each soul is judged. When the painting was revealed it was heavily criticized for its inclusion of classical imagery as well as for the amount of nude figures in somewhat suggestive poses. The ill reception that the work received may be tied to the Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent , which lead to a preference for more conservative religious art devoid of classical references. Although a number of figures were made more modest with the addition of drapery, the changes were not made until after the death of Michelangelo, demonstrating the respect and admiration that was afforded to him during his lifetime.

The Last Judgement: The fresco of *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel was commissioned by Pope Clement VII. Michelangelo worked on the project from 1534–1541.

Architecture: St. Peter's Basilica

Finally, although other architects were involved, Michelangelo is given credit for designing St. Peter's Basilica. Michelangelo's chief contribution was the use of a symmetrical plan of a Greek Cross form and an external masonry of massive proportions, with every corner filled in by a stairwell or small vestry. The effect is of a continuous wall surface that is folded or fractured at different angles, lacking the right angles that usually define change of direction at the corners of a building. This exterior is surrounded by a giant order of Corinthian pilasters all set at slightly different angles to each other, in keeping with the ever-changing angles of the

wall’s surface. Above them the huge cornice ripples in a continuous band, giving the appearance of keeping the whole building in a state of compression .

St. Peter’s Basillica: Michelangelo designed the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica on or before 1564, although it was unfinished when he died.

The Venetian Painters of the High Renaissance

Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese were the preeminent Venetian painters of the High Renaissance.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the impact of the paintings of Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese on art of the Venetian High Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Venetian High Renaissance artists Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese employed novel techniques of color, scale, and composition , which established them as acclaimed artists north of Rome .
- In particular, these three painters followed the Venetian School ‘s preference of color over disegno .
- Giorgio Barbarelli da Castlefranco, known as Giorgione (c. 1477–1510), is an artist who had considerable impact on the Venetian High Renaissance. Giorgione was the first to paint with oil on canvas.
- Tiziano Vecelli, or Titian (1490–1576), was arguably the most important member of the Venetian school, as well as one of the most versatile. His use of color would have a profound influence not only on painters of the Italian Renaissance, but on future generations in Western art.
- Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) was one of the primary Renaissance painters in Venice , known for his paintings such as *The Wedding at Cana* and T*he Feast in the House of Levi*.

Key Terms

- **disegno**: Drawing or design.
- **Venetian School**: The distinctive, thriving, and influential art scene in Venice, Italy, starting from the late 15th century.

Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese were the preeminent painters of the Venetian High Renaissance. All three similarly employed novel techniques of color and composition, which established them as acclaimed artists north of Rome. In particular, Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese follows the Venetian School’s preference of color over disegno.

Giorgione

Giorgio Barbarelli da Castlefranco, known as Giorgione (c. 1477–1510), is an artist who had considerable impact on the Venetian High Renaissance. Unfortunately, art historians do not know much about Giorgione, partly because of his early death at around age

30, and partly because artists in Venice were not as individualistic as artists in Florence. While only six paintings are accredited to him, they demonstrate his importance in the history of art as well as his innovations in painting.

Giorgione was the first to paint with oil on canvas. Previously, people who used oils were painting on panel, not canvas. His works do not contain much under-drawing, demonstrating how he did not adhere to Florentine disegno, and his subject matters remain elusive and mysterious. One of his works that demonstrates all three of these elements is *The Tempest* (c. 1505–1510). This work is oil on canvas, x-rays show there is very little under drawing, and the subject matter remains one of the most debated issues in art history.

The Tempest, c, 1505–1510, Giorgione.: This work by Giorgione encapsulates all of the innovations he brought to painting during the Venetian High Renaissance and remains one of the most debated paintings of all time for its elusive subject matter.

Titian

Tiziano Vecelli, or Titian (1490–1576), was arguably the most important member of the 16th century Venetian school, as well as one of the most versatile; he was equally adept with portraits, landscape backgrounds, and mythological and religious subjects. His painting methods, particularly in the application and use of color, would have a profound influence not only on painters of the Italian Renaissance, but on future generations of Western art. Over the course of his long life Titian's artistic manner changed drastically, but he retained a lifelong interest in color. Although his mature works may not contain the vivid, luminous tints of his early pieces, their loose brushwork and subtlety of polychromatic modulations were without precedent

In 1516, Titian completed his well-known masterpiece, the *Assumption of the Virgin*, or the *Assunta*, for the high altar of the church of the Frari. This extraordinary piece of colorism, executed on a grand scale rarely before seen in Italy, created a sensation. The pictorial structure of the *Assumption*—uniting in the same composition two or three scenes superimposed on different levels, earth and heaven, the temporal and the infinite—was continued in a series of his works, finally reaching a classic formula in the *Pesaro Madonna* (better known as the *Madonna di Ca' Pesaro*). This perhaps is Titian's most studied work; his patiently developed plan is set forth with supreme display of order and freedom, originality and style . Here, Titian gave a new conception of the traditional groups of donors and holy persons moving in aerial space , the plans and different degrees set in an architectural framework.

Assunta, Titian: It took Titian two years (1516–1518) to complete his Assunta. The painting's dynamic three-tier composition and color scheme established him as the preeminent painter north of Rome.

Veronese

Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) was one of the primary Renaissance painters in Venice, well known for paintings such as *The Wedding at Cana* and *The Feast in the House of Levi*. Veronese is known as a supreme colorist, and for his illusionistic decorations in both fresco and oil. His most famous works are elaborate narrative cycles, executed in the dramatic and colorful style, full of majestic architectural settings and glittering pageantry.

His large paintings of biblical feasts executed for the refectories of monasteries in Venice and Verona are especially notable. For example, in *The Wedding at Cana*, which was painted in 1562–1563 in collaboration with Palladio, Veronese arranged the architecture to run mostly parallel to the picture plane , accentuating the processional character of the composition. The artist's decorative genius was to recognize that dramatic perspective effects would have been tiresome in a living room or chapel, and that the narrative of the picture could best be absorbed as a colorful diversion.

The Wedding at Cana offers little in the representation of emotion: rather, it illustrates the carefully composed movement of its subjects along a primarily horizontal axis. Most of all, it is about the incandescence of light and color. Even as Veronese's use of color attained greater intensity and luminosity, his attention to narrative, human sentiment, and a more subtle and meaningful physical interplay between his figures became evident.

The Wedding at Cana, Paolo Veronese (1562–1563): The artist's decorative genius in The Wedding at Cana was to recognize that dramatic perspective effects would have been tiresome in a living room or chapel, and that the narrative of the picture could best be absorbed as a colorful diversion.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- C39Altima_Cena_-_Da_Vinci_5.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Supper_(Leonardo_da_Vinci). **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Last_Judgement_28Michelangelo29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Judgment_(Michelangelo). **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- High Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_art%23Arts_of_the_late_1400s_and_early_1500s. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- High Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/High%20Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- School of Athens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_School_of_Athens. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The School of Athens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_School_of_Athens. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- High Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Piet_-_Wikipedia_the_free_encyclopedia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet%C3%A0. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 27David27_by_Michelangelo_JBU0001.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Michelangelo_Bacchus.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacchus_(Michelangelo). **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bacchus (Michelangelo). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacchus_(Michelangelo). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- David (Michelangelo). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/David_(Michelangelo). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Michelangelo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Michelangelo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Roma-tempiettobramante01R.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Pietro_in_Montorio#The_Tempietto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Villa_Barbaro_panoramica_fronte_Marcok.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_Barbaro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Andrea Palladio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Palladio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- San Pietro in Montario. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Pietro_in_Montorio#The_Tempietto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Donato Bramante. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Donato_Bramante. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- High Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Leonardo_Da_Vinci_-_Vergine_delle_Rocce_28Louvre29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgin_of_the_Rocks. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- u00daltima Cena - Da Vinci 5. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%9Altima_Cena_-_Da_Vinci_5.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mona Lisa, by Leonardo da Vinci, from C2RMF retouched. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mona_Lisa,_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci,_from_C2RMF_retouched.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Leonardo da vinci, The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne 01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Leonardo_da_vinci,_The_Virgin_and_Child_with_Saint_Anne_01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Leonardo da Vinci. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sfumato. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sfumato. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Leonardo Da Vinci. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo%20Da%20Vinci. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Raffael stcatherina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Raffael_stcatherina.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Raffaello2C_pala_baglioni2C_deposizione.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Deposition_(Raphael). **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1_Estancia_del_Sello_28Vista_general_I29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael_Rooms. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Raffaello, studi per madonne col bambino. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Raffaello,_studi_per_madonne_col_bambino.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Saint Catherine of Alexandria (Raphael). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Catherine_of_Alexandria_(Raphael). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Raphael. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- contrapposto. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contrapposto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sprezzatura. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sprezzatura. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- loggia. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/loggia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- David von Michelangelo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:David_von_Michelangelo.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Petersdom von Engelsburg gesehen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Petersdom_von_Engelsburg_gesehen.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Michelangelo, Giudizio Universale 02. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo,_Giudizio_Universale_02.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- St Peter's Basilica. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Peter's_Basilica%23Michelangelo.27s_contribution. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- David (Michelangelo). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/David_(Michelangelo)%23Interpretation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Michelangelo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo%23Life_and_works. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- contrapposto. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contrapposto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sistine Chapel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sistine%20Chapel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paolo Veronese, The Wedding at Cana. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paolo_Veronese,_The_Wedding_at_Cana.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Tempest, Giorgione, c.1505-1510. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Giorgione. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tizian 041. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tizian_041.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Wedding at Cana. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wedding_at_Cana. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Assumption of the Virgin (Titian). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Assumption_of_the_Virgin_(Titian). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Tempest (Giorgione). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tempest_(Giorgione). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Giorgione. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Giorgione. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tintoretto. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tintoretto. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paolo Veronese. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paolo_Veronese%23Villa_Barbaro_and_refectory_paintings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Titian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Titian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Venetian School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Venetian%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/connoisseurship. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 19.5: The High Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

19.6: Mannerism

Mannerism

Mannerist artists began to reject the harmony and ideal proportions of the Renaissance in favor of irrational settings, artificial colors, unclear subject matters, and elongated forms.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Mannerist style, how it differs from the Renaissance, and reasons why it emerged.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mannerism came after the High Renaissance and before the Baroque .
- The artists who came a generation after Raphael and Michelangelo had a dilemma. They could not surpass the great works that had already been created by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo. This is when we start to see Mannerism emerge.
- Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557) represents the shift from the Renaissance to the Mannerist style .

Key Terms

- **Mannerism**: Style of art in Europe from c. 1520–1600. Mannerism came after the High Renaissance and before the Baroque. Not every artist painting during this period is considered a Mannerist artist.

Mannerism is the name given to a style of art in Europe from c. 1520–1600. Mannerism came after the High Renaissance and before the Baroque. Not every artist painting during this period is considered a Mannerist artist, however, and there is much debate among scholars over whether Mannerism should be considered a separate movement from the High Renaissance, or a stylistic phase of the High Renaissance. Mannerism will be treated as a separate art movement here as there are many differences between the High Renaissance and the Mannerist styles.

Style

What makes a work of art Mannerist? First we must understand the ideals and goals of the Renaissance. During the Renaissance artists were engaging with classical antiquity in a new way. In addition, they developed theories on perspective , and in all ways strived to create works of art that were perfect, harmonious, and showed ideal depictions of the natural world. Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo are considered the artists who reached the greatest achievements in art during the Renaissance.

The Renaissance stressed harmony and beauty and no one could create more beautiful works than the great three artists listed above. The artists who came a generation after had a dilemma; they could not surpass the great works that had already been created by da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo. This is when we start to see Mannerism emerge. Younger artists trying to do something new and different began to reject harmony and ideal proportions in favor of irrational settings, artificial colors, unclear subject matters, and elongated forms .

Jacopo da Pontormo

Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557) represents the shift from the Renaissance to the Mannerist style. Take for example his *Deposition from the Cross*, an altarpiece that was painted for a chapel in the Church of Santa Felicita, Florence. The figures of Mary and Jesus appear to be a direct reference to Michelangelo's *Pieta*. Although the work is called a "*Deposition,*" there is no cross. Scholars also refer to this work as the "Entombment" but there is no tomb. This lack of clarity on subject matter is a hallmark of Mannerist painting. In addition, the setting is irrational, almost as if it is not in this world, and the colors are far from naturalistic. This work could not have been produced by a Renaissance artist. The Mannerist movement stresses different goals and this work of art by Pontormo demonstrates this new, and different style.

Pontormo, *Deposition from the Cross*, 1525-1528, Church of Santa Felicita, Florence: This work of art by Pontormo demonstrates the hallmarks of the Mannerist style: unclear subject matter, irrational setting, and artificial colors.

Mannerist Painting

Mannerism emerged from the later years of the Italian High Renaissance, and is notable for its sophisticated and artificial qualities.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the painting of High Mannerism with its earlier, anti-classical phase

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mannerist painting encompasses a variety of approaches influenced by, and reacting to, the harmonious ideals and restrained naturalism associated with High Renaissance artists. Mannerism is notable for its intellectual sophistication as well as its artificial (as opposed to naturalistic) qualities.
- Mannerism developed in both Florence and Rome , from around 1520 until about 1580. The early Mannerist painters are notable for elongated forms , precariously balanced poses, a collapsed perspective , irrational settings, and theatrical lighting.
- The second period of Mannerist painting, called “Maniera Greca,” is differentiated from the earlier “anti-classical” phase. High Mannerists stressed intellectual conceits and artistic virtuosity, features that have led later critics to accuse them of working in an unnatural and affected “manner.”

Key Terms

- **Sack of Rome**: A military event carried out on May 6, 1527 by the mutinous troops of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor in Rome.

- **Mannerism**: A style of art developed at the end of the High Renaissance, characterized by the deliberate distortion and exaggeration of perspective, especially the elongation of figures.

Mannerism

Mannerism is a period of European art that emerged from the later years of the Italian High Renaissance. It began around 1520 and lasted until about 1580 in Italy, when a more Baroque style began to be favored. Stylistically, Mannerist painting encompasses a variety of approaches influenced by, and reacting to, the harmonious ideals and restrained naturalism associated with artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and early Michelangelo. Mannerism is notable for its intellectual sophistication as well as its artificial (as opposed to naturalistic) qualities. There is an existing debate between scholars as to whether Mannerism was its own, independent art movement, or if it should be considered as part of the High Renaissance.

Mannerist Painting

Mannerism developed in both Florence and Rome. The early Mannerist painters in Florence—especially Jacopo da Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino, both students of Andrea del Sarto—are notable for using elongated forms, precariously balanced poses, a collapsed perspective, irrational settings, and theatrical lighting. Parmigianino (a student of Correggio) and Giulio Romano (Raphael's head assistant) were moving in similarly stylized aesthetic directions in Rome. These artists had matured under the influence of the High Renaissance, and their style has been characterized as a reaction or exaggerated extension of it.

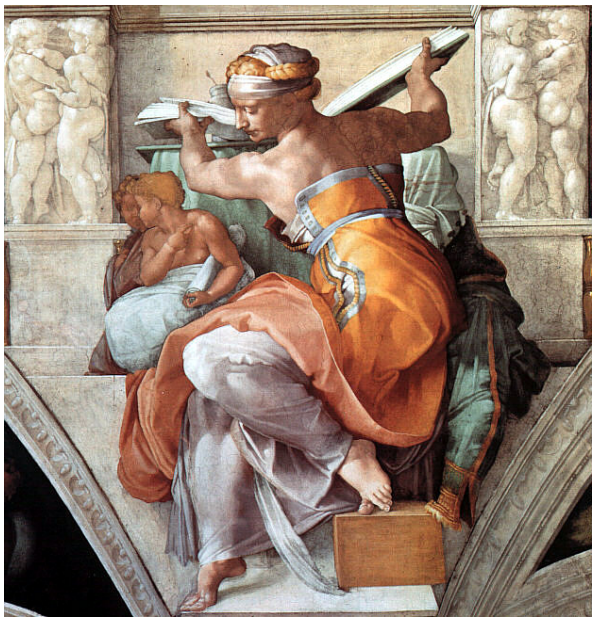
Madonna with the Long Neck: In Parmigianino's Madonna with the Long Neck (1534–40), Mannerism makes itself known by elongated proportions, highly stylized poses, and lack of clear perspective.

In other words, instead of studying nature directly, younger artists began studying Hellenistic sculptures and paintings of masters past. Therefore, this style is often identified as "anti-classical," yet at the time it was considered a natural progression from the High Renaissance. The earliest experimental phase of Mannerism, known for its "anti-classical" forms, lasted until about 1540 or 1550. This period has been described as both a natural extension of the art of Andrea del Sarto, Michelangelo, and Raphael, as well as a decline of those same artists' classicizing achievements.

In past analyses, it has been noted that Mannerism arose in the early 16th century alongside a number of other social, scientific, religious and political movements such as the Copernican model, the Sack of Rome , and the Protestant Reformation ‘s increasing challenge to the power of the Catholic Church. Because of this, the style’s elongated forms and distorted forms were once interpreted as a reaction to the idealized compositions prevalent in High Renaissance art.

Jacopo da Pontormo, Entombment, 1528, Santa Felicita, Florence : This work by Pontormo exemplifies early Mannerist paintings —the setting is irrational, the human forms are elongated and balanced in twisted poses, and the coloring of the work is artificial, as opposed to naturalistic.

This explanation for the radical stylistic shift in 1520 has fallen out of scholarly favor, though the early Mannerists are still set in stark contrast to High Renaissance conventions; the immediacy and balance achieved by Raphael’s School of Athens no longer seemed interesting to young artists. Indeed, Michelangelo himself displayed tendencies towards Mannerism, notably in his vestibule to the Laurentian Library, in the figures on his Medici tombs, and above all the Sistine Chapel .

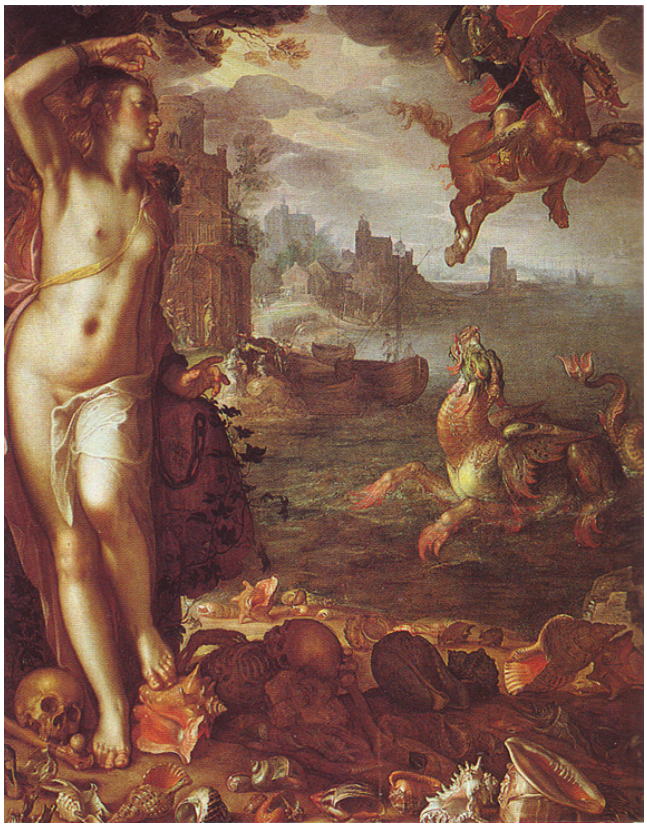


The Libyan Sibyl from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling: Michelangelo himself displayed tendencies towards Mannerism, notably in the Sistine Chapel.

Maniera Greca

The second period of Mannerist painting, called "Maniera Greca," or High Mannerism, is commonly differentiated from the earlier, so-called "anti-classical" phase. Influenced by earlier Byzantine art, High Mannerists stressed intellectual conceits and artistic virtuosity, features that have led later critics to accuse them of working in an unnatural and affected "manner" (maniera). Maniera artists held their elder contemporary Michelangelo as their prime example; theirs was an art imitating art, rather than an art imitating nature. Maniera art combines exaggerated elegance with exquisite attention to surface and detail: porcelain-skinned figures recline in an even, tempered light, regarding the viewer with a cool glance, if at all. The Maniera subject rarely displays an excess of emotion, and for this reason is often interpreted as "cold" or "aloof. "

A number of the earliest Mannerist artists who had been working in Rome during the 1520s fled the city after the Sack of Rome in 1527. As they spread out across the continent in search of employment, their style was distributed throughout Italy and Europe. The result was the first international artistic style since the Gothic style (including French, English, and Dutch Mannerism styles). The style waned in Italy after 1580, as a new generation of artists, including the Carracci brothers, Caravaggio and Cigoli, reemphasized naturalism. Walter Friedlaender identified this period as "anti-mannerism," just as the early Mannerists were "anti-classical" in their reaction to the High Renaissance.



Joachim Wtewael's Perseus and Andromeda, 1616: An example of 17th century Dutch Mannerism.

Mannerist Sculpture

Mannerist sculpture, like Mannerist painting, was characterized by elongated forms, spiral angles, twisting poses, and aloof subject gazes.

Learning Objectives

Define characteristics of Mannerist sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Figura serpentinata (Italian: serpentine figure) is a style in painting and sculpture that is typical of Mannerism . It is similar, but not identical, to contrapposto , and often features figures in spiral poses.
- The Mannerist style of sculpture began to create a form in which figures showed physical power, passion, tension, and semantic perfection. Movements were not without motivation, nor even simply done with a will, but were shown in a pure form.
- Mannerist sculpture was an attempt to find an original style that would surpass the achievements of the High Renaissance , which was equated with Michelangelo. Much of the struggle to surpass his success centered on commissions to fill other places in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, next to Michelangelo's *David*.

Key Terms

- **Figura Serpentinata**: Figura Serpentinata (Italian: serpentine figure) is a style in painting and sculpture that is typical of Mannerism. It is similar, but not identical, to contrapposto, and features figures often in a spiral pose.
- **Mannerism**: A style of art developed at the end of the High Renaissance, characterized by the deliberate distortion and exaggeration of perspective, especially the elongation of figures.
- **piazza**: A public square, especially in an Italian city.

While sculpture of the High Renaissance is characterized by forms with perfect proportions and restrained beauty, as best characterized by Michelangelo's *David*, Mannerist sculpture, like Mannerist painting, was characterized by elongated forms, spiral angels, twisted poses, and aloof subject gazes. Additionally, Mannerist sculptors worked in precious metals much more frequently than sculptors of the High Renaissance.

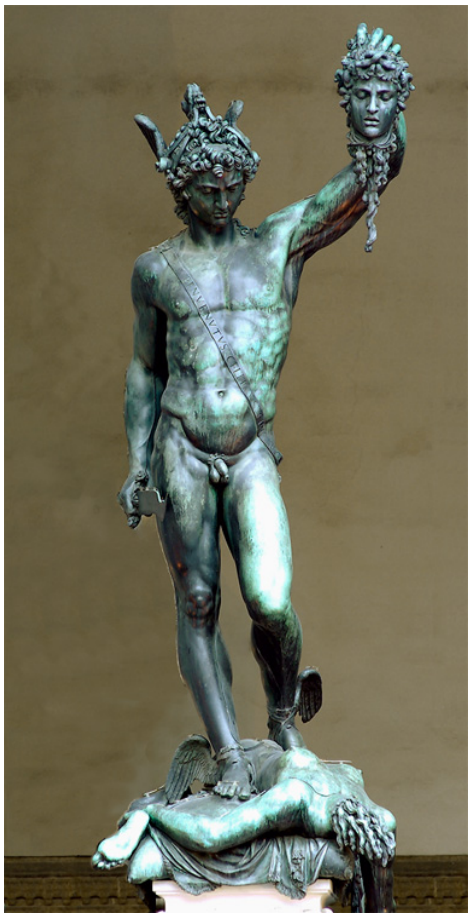
Figura serpentinata (Italian: serpentine figure) is a style in painting and sculpture that is typical of Mannerism. It is similar, but not identical, to contrapposto, and often features figures in spiral poses. Early examples can be seen in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo. In defining figura serpentinata, Emil Maurer writes of the painter and theorist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo: "the recommended ideal form unites, after Lomazzo, three qualities: the pyramid , the 'serpentinata' movement and a certain numerical proportion, all three united to form one whole. At the same time, precedence is given to the 'moto', that is, to the meandering movement, which should make the pyramid, in exact proportion, into the geometrical form of a cone."

With the loosening of the norms of the High Renaissance and the development of the "Serpentinata" style, the Mannerist style's structures and rules began to be systematized. The Mannerist style of sculpture began to create a form in which figures showed physical power, passion, tension, and semantic perfection. Mannerist figural sculpture was marked by contorted, twisting poses, as best evidenced by Giambologna's Rape of the Sabine Women.

Rape of the Sabine Women, Giambologna, 1583, Florence: In this 13′ 6″ high marble piece, Giambologna demonstrates the use of the figura serpentinata.

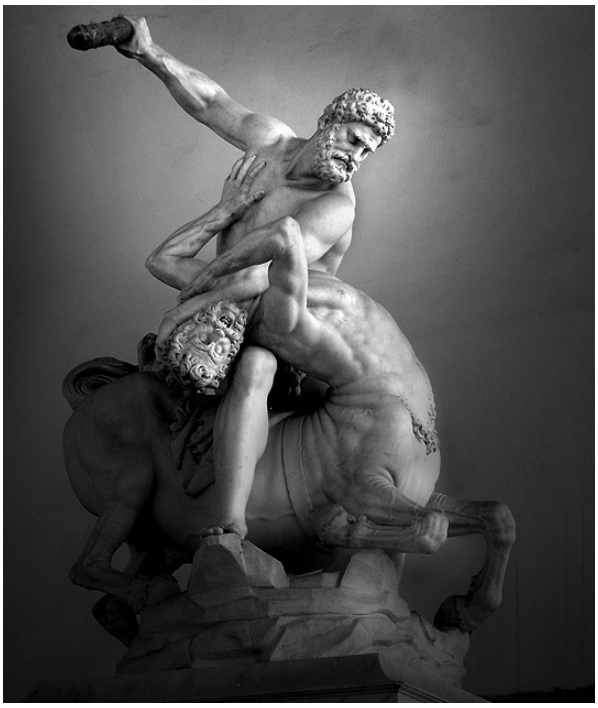
As in painting, early Italian Mannerist sculpture was largely an attempt to find an original style that would expand and surpass the achievements of the High Renaissance. For contemporaries in sculpture, the High Renaissance was equated with Michelangelo, and much of the struggle to surpass his success was played out in commissions to fill other places in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, next to Michelangelo's *David*.

For example, Baccio Bandinelli took over the project of *Herculesand Cacus* from Michelangelo, although his work was maliciously compared by Benvenuto Cellini to "a sack of melons." Like other works of Mannerists, Bandinelli removes far more of the original block of stone than Michelangelo would have done. Outside of natural stone sculptures, Cellini's bronze Perseus with the head of Medusa is a Mannerist masterpiece, designed with eight angles of view.



Perseus with the Head of Medusa, Benvenuto Celling, 1545–1554:

Small bronze figures for collector’s cabinets, often mythological subjects with nudes, were characteristic of Mannerist sculpture. They were a popular Renaissance form at which Giambologna excelled in the later part of the century. He and his followers devised elegant, elongated examples of the figura serpentinata, often of two intertwined figures, that were interesting from all angles and joined the Piazza della Signora collection.



Hercules Beating Nessus by Giambologna, 1599, Florence:

Mannerist Architecture

During the Mannerist period, architects experimented with using architectural forms to emphasize solid and spatial relationships. They did so by deliberately playing with the symmetry, order, and harmony typically found in Renaissance architecture.

Learning Objectives

Relate Mannerist architecture to the Early Renaissance style that came before

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Stylistically, Mannerist architecture was marked by widely diverging tendencies from Renaissance and Medieval styles that eventually led to the Baroque style, in which the same architectural vocabulary was used for very different rhetoric.
- Michelangelo (1475–1564) is the best known artist associated with Mannerism .

Key Terms

- **Mannerist architecture**: During the Mannerist period, architects experimented with using architectural forms to emphasize solid and spatial relationships. The Renaissance ideal of harmony gave way to freer and more imaginative rhythms.

During the High Renaissance , architectural concepts derived from classical antiquity were developed and used with greater surety. The most representative architect of this period is Bramante (1444–1514), who expanded the applicability of classical architecture to contemporary buildings in a style that would dominate Italian architecture in the 16th century. Hallmarks of High Renaissance architecture are symmetry , proportion, order, harmony, and deliberate references to the buildings of the classical past.

During the Mannerist period architects experimented with using architectural forms to emphasize solid and spatial relationships. They did so by deliberately playing with the symmetry, order, and harmony typically found in Renaissance architecture. As a result, Mannerist architecture appears playful, almost as if the architects are deliberately playing with expectations put forth by Renaissance architecture.

In Mannerist architecture, the Renaissance ideal of harmony gave way to freer and more imaginative rhythms. The best known artist associated with the Mannerist style is Michelangelo (1475–1564). With his design for the vestibule of the Laurentian Library,

there are ambiguities of how to read the space , which result from Michelangelo's playfulness with the architecture itself. Columns lean back instead of forward, and the corners come out toward you instead of recessing. Michelangelo was aware of the ideals of Renaissance architecture but he is deliberately playing with those ideals and creating something new.

Michelangelo, Vestibule of the Laurentian Library, Florence: With his design, Michelangelo played with the classical proportions and harmony of Renaissance architecture to create something new.

Stylistically, Mannerist architecture was marked by widely diverging tendencies from Renaissance and Medieval styles that eventually led to the Baroque style, in which the same architectural vocabulary was used for very different rhetoric.

Baldassare Peruzzi (1481–1536) was an architect working in Rome whose work bridged the High Renaissance and Mannerism. His Villa Farnesina of 1509 is a very regular monumental cube of two equal stories, with the bays articulated by orders of pilasters .

Villa Farnesina, Rome, by Peruzzi, 1506–1510.

Peruzzi's most famous work is the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne in Rome. The unusual features of this building are that its façade curves gently to follow a curving street. It has, in its ground floor, a dark central portico running parallel to the street, but as a semi-enclosed space, rather than an open loggia . Above this, three undifferentiated floors rise, the upper two with identical small horizontal windows in thin flat frames that contrast strangely with the deep porch, which has served, from the time of its construction, as a refuge to the city's poor. All of these architectural features are unexpected and disrupt the ideas of harmonious proportions, making it a Mannerist building.

Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, Rome, by Peruzzi

Giulio Romano (1499–1546) was a pupil of Raphael, assisting him on various works for the Vatican. Romano was also a highly inventive designer, working for Federico II Gonzaga at Mantua on the Palazzo del Te (1524–1534), a project that combined his skills as architect, sculptor, and painter. In this work, which incorporated garden grottoes and extensive frescoes , he uses illusionistic effects, surprising combinations of architectural form and texture , and features that seem somewhat disproportionate or out of alignment, making it very much a Mannerist structure.

Palazzo del Te, Manuta, by Romano, 1524–1534.: Romano's Palazzo del Te incorporates mixture of architectural forms and textures.

Mannerism and the Counter-Reformation

Mannerism concerned many Catholic leaders in the wake of the Reformation, as they were seen as lacking pious appeal.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish the artistic ideal of the Counter-Reformation from Mannerism and the art of the Reformation in Northern Europe

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Pressure to restrain religious imagery affected art from the 1530s and influenced several decrees from the final session of the Council of Trent in 1563. These decrees included short passages on religious images that had significant impact on the development of Catholic art during the Counter- Reformation .
- The Counter-Reformation Catholic Church promoted art with “sacred” or religious content. In other words, art was to be strictly religious, created for the purpose of glorifying God and Catholic traditions.

Key Terms

- **refectory**: A dining-hall especially in an institution such as a college or monastery.
- **Counter-Reformation**: The period of Catholic revival beginning with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and ending at the close of the Thirty Years’ War (1648); sometimes considered a response to the Protestant Reformation.

Italian Painting and Mannerism

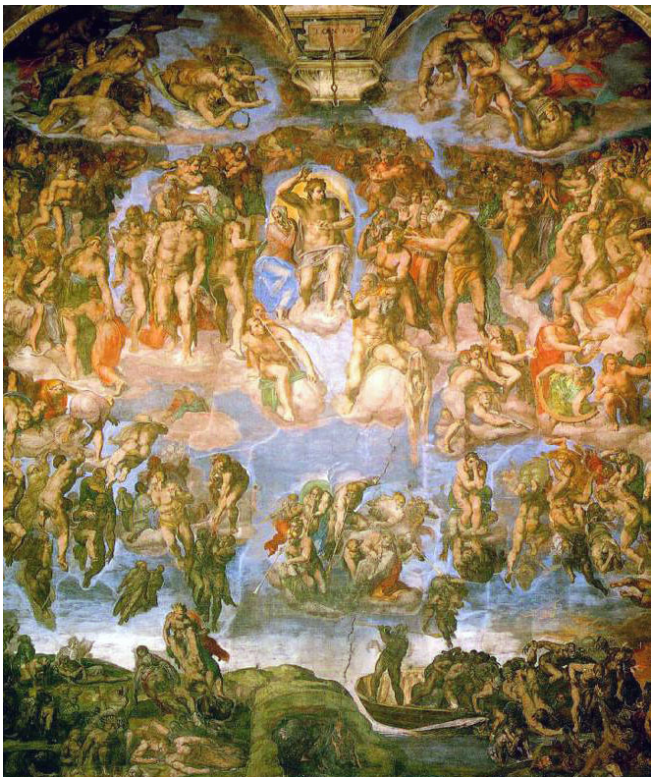
Italian Renaissance painting after 1520 developed certain characteristics that are considered Mannerist , such as elongated forms and irrational settings. Mannerism, as well as works from the High Renaissance , concerned many Catholic leaders in the wake of the Reformation, as they were seen as lacking pious appeal. Furthermore, a great divergence had arisen between the Catholic Church and Protestant reformers of Northern Europe regarding the content and style of art work.

Church pressure to restrain religious imagery affected art from the 1530s and influenced several decrees from the final session of the Council of Trent in 1563. These decrees included short passages concerning religious images that had significant impact on the development of Catholic art during the Counter-Reformation. The Church felt that religious art in Catholic countries (especially Italy) had lost its focus on religious subject matter. It focused on decorative qualities instead, with heavy influences from classical , pagan art, leading to a church decree that “art was to be direct and compelling in its narrative presentation, that it was to provide an accurate presentation of the biblical narrative or saint’s life, rather than adding incidental and imaginary moments, and that it was to encourage piety” (Paoletti and Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy).* The reforms that resulted from this council are what set the basis for Counter-Reformation art.

The Counter-Reformation Movement

While the Protestants largely removed public art from religion and moved towards a more “secular” style of art, embracing the concept of glorifying God through depictions of nature, the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church promoted art with “sacred” or religious content. In other words, art was to be strictly religious, created for the purpose of glorifying God and Catholic traditions.

To that end, *The Last Judgment*, a fresco on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo (1534–41), came under attack for its classical imagery and the large quantity of nudes, some of which were interpreted at the time as being in compromising poses. *The Last Judgment* was an object of dispute between critics within the Catholic Counter-Reformation and those who appreciated the genius of the artist and the Mannerist style of the painting. Michelangelo was accused of being insensitive to proper decorum, and of flaunting personal style over appropriate depictions of content. The fresco was also completed at a time when prints could be made of the work and distributed throughout Northern Europe, the base for criticisms against the Catholic Church. While Michelangelo had been celebrated during the Renaissance for his classical influence and depictions of monumental nudes in a variety of poses, here he was being criticized for *The Last Judgment*. Michelango was not doing anything new or different from his previous style, which had been celebrated in the past. This demonstrates how the historical situation had altered and just how threatened the Catholic Church felt at this time in history.



The Last Judgement: *The Last Judgment* fresco in the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo (1534–41) came under persistent attack in the Counter-Reformation for nudity (later painted over for several centuries), not showing Christ seated or bearded, and including the pagan figure of Charon.

Scipione Pulzone's painting of the Lamentation, commissioned for the Gesu Church in 1589, gives a clear demonstration of what the Council of Trent was striving for in the new style of religious art. With the focus of the painting giving direct attention to the crucifixion of Christ, it complies with the religious content of the council and shows the story of the Passion while keeping Christ in the image of the ideal human.

Lamentation: Scipione Pulzone's Lamentation, a pious depiction of the Crucifixion, embodied a typical Counter-Reformation work.

On the other hand, in Paolo Veronese's painting *The Last Supper* (subsequently renamed *The Feast in the House of Levi*), one can see what the Council regarded as inappropriate. Veronese was summoned before the Inquisition on the basis that his composition was indecorous for the refectory of a monastery. The painting shows a fantasy version of a Venetian patrician feast, with, in the words of the Inquisition: "buffoons, drunken Germans, dwarfs and other such scurrilities" as well as extravagant costumes and settings. Veronese was told that he must change his painting within a three-month period; instead he simply changed the title to *The Feast in the House of Levi* .

Last Supper/House of Levi: Paolo Veronese was accused of being indecorous for the refectory of a monastery in his *Last Supper* (*The Feast in the House of Levi*).

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Deposition_from_the_Cross__artble.com. **Provided by**: artble. **Located at**: http://www.artble.com/artists/rosso_fiorentino/paintings/deposition_from_the_cross. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pontormo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontormo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Deposition from the Cross (Pontormo). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Deposition_from_the_Cross_(Pontormo). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pontormo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontormo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Louvre wtewael 1616. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Louvre_wtewael_1616.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Parmigianino 003b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parmigianino_003b.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jacopo_Pontormo_004.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Michelangelo the libyan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo_the_libyan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Madonna with the Long Neck. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna_with_the_Long_Neck. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/sack-of-rome. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Giambologna herculesenesso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Giambologna_herculesenesso.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Persee-florence. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Persee-florence.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Giambologna raptodasabina. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Giambologna_raptodasabina.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Perseus with the Head of Medusa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Perseus_with_the_Head_of_Medusa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Rape of the Sabine Women. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rape_of_the_Sabine_Women. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Figura serpentinata. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Figura_serpentinata. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism%23Sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Figura Serpentinata. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Figura%20Serpentinata. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- piazza. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/piazza. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palazzo Te Mantova 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palazzo_Te_Mantova_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Biblioteca_laurenziana2C_vestibolo_04.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism#Mannerist_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Villa_farnesina_01.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_Farnesina. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palazzo_Massimo_alle_Colonne.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Palazzo del Te. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_del_Te. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture%23Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerist architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mannerist%20architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Michelangelo - Fresco of the Last Judgement. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo_-_Fresco_of_the_Last_Judgement.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lamentation Scipione Pulzone. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lamentation_Scipione_Pulzone.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paolo Veronese. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paolo_Veronese.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Last Judgment (Michelangelo). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Judgment_(Michelangelo). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Counter-Reformation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation%23Decrees_on_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Reformation and art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Reformation_and_art%23Art_and_the_Counter-Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- refectory. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/refectory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Counter-Reformation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 19.6: Mannerism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

20: The Northern Renaissance

20.1: The Northern Renaissance

20.2: Painting in the Northern Renaissance

20.3: Books of the Northern Renaissance

20.4: Architecture of the Northern Renaissance

20.5: Sculpture of the Northern Renaissance

20.6: Textiles of the Northern Renaissance

This page titled 20: The Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

20.1: The Northern Renaissance

The Northern Renaissance

Before 1450, Renaissance humanism had little influence outside Italy; after 1450, these ideas began to spread throughout Europe.

Learning Objectives

Describe how the Northern Renaissance differed from the Italian Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Humanism influenced the Renaissance periods in Germany, France, England, the Netherlands, and Poland. There were also other national and localized movements, each with different characteristics and strengths.
- Northern painters in the 16th century increasingly looked to Rome for influence, and became known as the Romanists . The High Renaissance art of Michelangelo and Raphael and the stylistic tendencies of Mannerism also had a great impact on their work.
- Although Renaissance humanism and the large number of surviving classical artworks and monuments in Italy encouraged many Italian painters to explore Greco-Roman themes, Northern Renaissance painters developed other subject matters, such as landscape and genre painting.

Key Terms

- **Romanists**: A group of artists in the late 15th and early 16th century from the Netherlands who began to visit Italy and started to incorporate Renaissance influences in their work.
- **Northern Renaissance**: The Northern Renaissance describes the Renaissance as it occurred in northern Europe.

The Northern Renaissance describes the Renaissance in northern Europe. Before 1450, Renaissance humanism had little influence outside Italy; however, after 1450 these ideas began to spread across Europe. This influenced the Renaissance periods in Germany, France, England, the Netherlands, and Poland. There were also other national and localized movements. Each of these regional expressions of the Renaissance evolved with different characteristics and strengths. In some areas, the Northern Renaissance was distinct from the Italian Renaissance in its centralization of political power. While Italy and Germany were dominated by independent city-states , parts of central and western Europe began emerging as nation-states. The Northern Renaissance was also closely linked to the Protestant Reformation , and the long series of internal and external conflicts between various Protestant groups and the Roman Catholic Church had lasting effects.

As in Italy, the decline of feudalism opened the way for the cultural, social, and economic changes associated with the Renaissance in northern Europe. Northern painters in the 16th century increasingly looked to Rome for influence, and became known as the Romanists. The High Renaissance art of Michelangelo and Raphael and the stylistic tendencies of Mannerism had a significant impact on their work. Although Renaissance humanism and the large number of surviving classical artworks and monuments in Italy encouraged many Italian painters to explore Greco-Roman themes, Northern Renaissance painters developed other subject matters, such as landscape and genre painting.

Danae by Jan Mabuse: One of the most well-known Romanists was Jan Mabuse. The influence of Michelangelo and Raphael showed in the use of mythology and nudity in this particular piece.

As Renaissance art styles moved through northern Europe, they were adapted to local customs. For example, in England and the northern Netherlands, the Reformation nearly ended the tradition of religious painting. In France, the School of Fontainebleau, which was originally founded by Italians such as Rosso Fiorentino, succeeded in establishing a durable national style. Finally, by the end of the 16th century, artists such as Karel van Mander and Hendrik Goltzius collected in Haarlem in a brief but intense phase of Northern Mannerism that also spread to Flanders .

Impact of the Protestant Reformation

The Reformation was a religious movement in the 16th century that resulted in the theological divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Protestant Reformation and its effects on Western European art of the 16th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Art that portrayed religious figures or scenes followed Protestant theology by depicting people and stories accurately and clearly and emphasized salvation through divine grace, rather than through personal deeds, or by intervention of church bureaucracy.
- Reformation art embraced Protestant values , although the amount of religious art produced in Protestant countries was hugely reduced. Instead, many artists in Protestant countries diversified into secular forms of art like history painting , landscapes, portraiture, and still life .

- The Protestant Reformation induced a wave of iconoclasm , or the destruction of religious imagery , among the more radical evangelists.

Key Terms

- **Protestant Reformation**: The 16th century schism within Western Christianity initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other early Protestants; characterized by the objection to the doctrines, rituals, and ecclesiastical structure of the Roman Catholic Church and led to the creation of Protestant churches, which were outside of the control of the Vatican.
- **iconoclasm**: The belief in, participation in, or sanction of destroying religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.

The Protestant Reformation and Art

The Protestant Reformation was a religious movement that occurred in Western Europe during the 16th century that resulted in the theological divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants. This movement created a North-South split in Europe, where generally Northern countries became Protestant, while Southern countries remained Catholic. Protestant theology centered on the individual relationship between the worshiper and the divine, and accordingly, the Reformation's artistic movement focused on the individual's personal relationship with God. This was reflected in a number of common people and day-to-day scenes depicted in art.

The Reformation ushered in a new artistic tradition that highlighted the Protestant belief system and diverged drastically from southern European humanist art produced during the High Renaissance . Reformation art embraced Protestant values, although the amount of religious art produced in Protestant countries was hugely reduced (largely because a huge patron for the arts—the Catholic Church—was no longer active in these countries). Instead, many artists in Protestant countries diversified into secular forms of art like history painting, landscapes, portraiture, and still life.

Art that portrayed religious figures or scenes followed Protestant theology by depicting people and stories accurately and clearly and emphasized salvation through divine grace, rather than through personal deeds, or by intervention of church bureaucracy. This is the direct influence of one major criticism of the Catholic Church during the Reformation—that painters created biblical scenes that strayed from their true story, were hard to identify, and were embellished with painterly effects instead of focusing on the theological message. In terms of subject matter, iconic images of Christ and scenes from the Passion became less frequent, as did portrayals of the saints and clergy. Instead, narrative scenes from the Bible and moralistic depictions of modern life became prevalent.

The Protestant Reformation also capitalized on the popularity of printmaking in northern Europe. Printmaking allowed images to be mass produced and widely available to the public at low cost. The Protestant church was therefore able to bring their theology to the people through portable, inexpensive visual media . This allowed for the widespread availability of visually persuasive imagery. With the great development of the engraving and printmaking market in Antwerp in the 16th century, the public was provided with accessible and affordable images. Many artists provided drawings to book and print publishers.

Iconoclasm and Resistance to Idolatry

All forms of Protestantism showed a degree of hostility to religious images, especially sculpture and large paintings, considering them forms of idol worship. After the early years of the Reformation, artists in Protestant areas painted far fewer religious subjects for public display, partly because religious art had long been associated with the Catholic Church. Although, there was a conscious effort to develop a Protestant iconography of Bible images in book illustrations and prints. During the early Reformation, some artists made paintings for churches that depicted the leaders of the Reformation in ways very similar to Catholic saints. Later, Protestant taste turned away from the display of religious scenes in churches, although some continued to be displayed in homes.

There was also a reaction against images from classical mythology, the other manifestation of the High Renaissance at the time. This brought about a style that was more directly related to accurately portraying the present times. For example, Bruegel's *Wedding Feast* portrays a Flemish-peasant wedding dinner in a barn. It makes no reference to any religious, historical, or classical events, and merely gives insight into the everyday life of the Flemish peasant.

Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding*: Bruegael's *Peasant Wedding* is a painting that captures the Protestant Reformation artistic tradition: focusing on scenes from modern life rather than religious or classical themes.

The Protestant Reformation induced a wave of iconoclasm, or the destruction of religious imagery, among the more radical evangelists. Protestant leaders, especially Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin, actively eliminated imagery from their churches and regarded the great majority of religious images as idolatrous—even plain crosses. On the other hand, Martin Luther encouraged the display of a restricted range of religious imagery in churches. For the most part, however, Reformation iconoclasm resulted in a disappearance of religious figurative art, compared with the amount of secular pieces that emerged.

Iconoclasm: Catholic Altar Piece: Altar piece in St. Martin's Cathedral, Utrecht, attacked in the Protestant iconoclasm in 1572. This retable became visible again after restoration in 1919 removed the false wall placed in front of it.

Antwerp: A Center of the Northern Renaissance

Antwerp, located in Belgium, was a center for art in the Netherlands and northern Europe for much of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Antwerp Mannerism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Antwerp School for painting flourished during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Antwerp School comprised many generations of artists and is known for portraiture, animal paintings, still lifes, and prints.
- Antwerp Mannerism bore no relation to Renaissance Mannerism, but the name suggests a reaction to the “classic” style of the earlier Flemish painters. Although attempts have been made to identify individual artists, most paintings remain attributed to anonymous masters.
- Antwerp was an internationally significant publishing center, with prodigious production of old master prints and book illustrations. Furthermore, Antwerp animaliers, or animal painters, such as Frans Snyders, Jan Fyt, and Paul de Vos, dominated animal painting in Europe.

Key Terms

- **Antwerp School**: The Antwerp School is a term for the artists active in Antwerp, first during the 16th century when the city was the economic center of the Low Countries, and then during the 17th century when it became the artistic stronghold of the Flemish Baroque under Peter Paul Rubens.
- **Antwerp**: A province of Flanders, Belgium.

Antwerp, located in present-day Belgium, was a center for art in the Netherlands and northern Europe for much of the 16th and 17th centuries. The so-called Antwerp School for painting flourished during the 16th century when the city was the economic center of the Low Countries, and again during the 17th century when it became the artistic stronghold of the Flemish Baroque . The Antwerp School comprised many generations of artists and is known for portraiture, animal paintings, still lifes, and prints.

Antwerp became the main trading and commercial center of the Low Countries around 1500, and the boost in the economy attracted many artists to the cities to join craft guilds . For example, many 16th century painters, artists, and craftsmen joined the Guild of Saint Luke, which educated apprentices and guaranteed quality. The first school of artists to emerge in the city were the Antwerp Mannerists , a group of anonymous late Gothic painters active in the city from about 1500 to 1520.

Antwerp Mannerism bore no direct relation to Renaissance or Italian Mannerism, but the name suggests a style that was a reaction to the “classic” style of the earlier Flemish painters. Although attempts have been made to identify individual artists, most paintings remain attributed to anonymous masters. Characteristic of Antwerp Mannerism are paintings that combine early Netherlandish and Northern Renaissance styles, and incorporate both Flemish and Italian traditions into the same compositions . Practitioners of the style frequently painted subjects such as the Adoration of the Magi and the Nativity, both of which are generally represented as night scenes, crowded with figures and dramatically illuminated. The Adoration scenes were especially popular with the Antwerp Mannerists, who delighted in the patterns of the elaborate clothes worn by the Magi and the ornamentation of the architectural ruins in which the scene was set.

The Adoration of the Kings by Jan Gossaert: This painting captures the Antwerp Mannerist tradition of using religious themes, particularly the Adoration of the Magi, for inspiration.

The iconoclastic riots (“Beeldenstorm” in Dutch) of 1566 that preceded the Dutch Revolt resulted in the destruction of many works of religious art , after which time the churches and monasteries had to be refurnished and redecorated. Artists such as Otto van Veen and members of the Francken family, working in a late Mannerist style, provided new religious decoration. These also marked the beginning of economic decline in the city, as the Scheldt river was blockaded by the Dutch Republic in 1585 and trade restricted.

The city experienced an artistic renewal in the 17th century. The large workshops of Peter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens, along with the influence of Anthony van Dyck, made Antwerp the center of the Flemish Baroque. The city was an internationally significant publishing center, with prodigious production of old master prints and book illustrations. Furthermore, Antwerp animaliers or animal painters, such as Frans Snyders, Jan Fyt ,and Paul de Vos, dominated animal painting in Europe for at least the first half of the century. But as the economy continued to decline, and the Habsburg nobility and the Church reduced their patronage , many artists trained in Antwerp left for the Netherlands, England, France, or elsewhere. By the end of the 17th century, Antwerp was no longer a major artistic center.

Hunting Trophies: Jan Fyt, a member of the Antwerp School, was well known for the use of animal motifs in his paintings.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Jan Gossaert 003. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Gossaert_003.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Northern renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Northern Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern%20Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanism_(painting). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pieter Bruegel d.nu00c4.n011. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Bruegel_d._%C3%84._011.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Altaarretabel Domkerk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Altaarretabel_Domkerk.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Peasant Wedding. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Peasant_Wedding. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Reformation and art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Reformation_and_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconoclasm. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconoclasm. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Protestant Reformation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant%20Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jan Gossaert 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Gossaert_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jan Fyt 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Fyt_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Adoration of the Kings (Gossaert). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Adoration_of_the_Kings_(Gossaert). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antwerp Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Antwerp_Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antwerp school. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Antwerp_school. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antwerp School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Antwerp%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Antwerp. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Antwerp. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 20.1: The Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

20.2: Painting in the Northern Renaissance

Flemish Painting in the Northern Renaissance

The Flemish School refers to artists who were active in Flanders during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Compare the artistic advances seen in the works of Robern Campin, Jan van Eyck, and Rogier van der Weyden

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The three most prominent painters during this period, Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, and Rogier van der Weyden, were known for making significant advances in illusionism , or the realistic and precise representation of people, space , and objects.
- The preferred subject matter of the Flemish School was typically religious in nature, and the majority of the work was presented as panels, usually in the form of diptychs or polyptychs.
- While the Italian Renaissance was based on rediscoveries of classical Greece and Rome , the Flemish school drew influence from the region's Gothic past.
- Van Eyck is known for signing and dating his work "ALS IK KAN" ("AS I CAN").
- Robert Campin has been identified with the signature "Master of Flemalle."
- Because the Flemish masters used a workshop system, they were able to mass produce high-end panels for sale and export throughout Europe.

Key Terms

- **illusionism**: The realistic and precise representation of people, space, and objects.
- **tempera**: A type of painting where color pigments are mixed with a binder, usually egg. Tempera can also refers to the finished work of art itself.
- **triptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on three tablets connected by hinges.
- **polyptych**: A work consisting of multiple painted or carved panels joined together, often with hinges.

The Flemish School

The Flemish School, which has also been called the Northern Renaissance , the Flemish Primitive School, and Early Netherlandish, refers to artists who were active in Flanders during the 15th and 16th centuries, especially in the cities of Bruges and Ghent. The three most prominent painters during this period—Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, and Rogier van der Weyden—were known for making significant advances in illusionism, or the realistic and precise representation of people, space, and objects. The preferred subject matter of the Flemish School was typically religious in nature, but small portraits were common as well. The majority of this work was presented as either panels, single altarpieces , or more complex altarpieces, which were usually in the form of diptychs or polyptychs.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Low Countries became a political and artistic center focused around the cities of Bruges and Ghent. Because Flemish masters employed a workshop system, wherein craftsmen helped to complete their art, they were able to mass produce high-end panels for sale throughout Europe. The Flemish School emerged almost concurrently with the Italian Renaissance. However, while the Italian Renaissance was based on the rediscoveries of classical Greek and Roman culture , the Flemish school drew influence from the area's Gothic past. These artists also experimented with oil paint earlier than their Italian Renaissance peers.

Robert Campin

Robert Campin, considered the first master of the Flemish School, has been identified with the signature *"Master of Flemalle,"* which appears on numerous works of art. Campin is known for producing highly realistic works, for making great use of perspective and shading, and for being one of the first artists to work with oil paint instead of tempera . One of his best known

works, the *Merode Altarpiece*, is a triptych that depicts an Annunciation Scene. The Archangel Gabriel approaches Mary as she is reading in a room that is recognized as a typical middle class Flanders home. The work is highly realistic, and the objects throughout the painting conveyed recognizable, religious meaning to viewers at the time.

The Merode Altarpiece attributed to Robert Campin: *The Merode Altarpiece* is a triptych that features the Archangel Gabriel approaching Mary, who is reading in a well-decorated, typical middle class Flanders home.

Jan Van Eyck

Jan van Eyck, a contemporary of Campin, is widely considered to be one of the most significant Northern European painters of the 15th century. He is known for signing and dating his work “ALS IK KAN” (“AS I CAN”). Signatures were not particularly customary during this time, but helped to secure his lasting reputation. Active in Bruges, and very popular within his own lifetime, van Eyck’s work was highly innovative and technical. It exhibited a masterful manipulation of oil paint and a high degree of realism . While van Eyck completed many famous paintings, perhaps his most famous is the *Ghent Altarpiece*, a commissioned polyptych from around 1432.

The Ghent Altarpiece by Jan van Eyck: *The Ghent Altarpiece*, a commissioned polyptych from around 1432, is perhaps van Eyck’s most famous work.

Rogier van der Weyden

Rogier van der Weyden is the last of the three most renowned Early Flemish painters. An apprentice under Robert Campin, van der Weyden exhibited many stylistic similarities, including the use of realism. Highly successful in his lifetime, his surviving works are mainly religious triptychs, altarpieces, and commissioned portraits. By the end of the 15th century, van der Weyden surpassed even van Eyck in popularity. Van der Weyden’s most well-known painting is *The Descent From the Cross*, circa 1435.

The Descent from the Cross by Rogier van der Weyden: Van der Weyden's most well-known painting is *The Descent From the Cross*, circa 1435.

Panel Painting in the Northern Renaissance

The court of the Holy Roman Emperor played an important role in panel paintings during the Northern Renaissance.

Learning Objectives

Describe panel painting in the Holy Roman Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- A panel painting is a painting made on a flat panel made of wood, either a single piece or a number of pieces joined together. Until canvas became the more popular support medium in the 16th century, panels were the normal form of support for a painting not painted directly onto a wall (known as a fresco) or vellum , which was used for miniatures in illuminated manuscripts and paintings for the framing.

Key Terms

- **Holy Roman Emperor**: A term used by historians to denote a medieval ruler who had also received the title "Emperor of the Romans" from the Pope.

The court of the Holy Roman Emperor , originally based in Prague, played an important role in supporting artists as patrons during the Northern Renaissance . During this time period, works of art were often painted on wooden panels and are referred to as "tempera on panel" or "oil on panel." A panel painting is a painting made on a flat panel made of wood, either a single piece or a number of pieces joined together. Until canvas became the more popular support medium in the 16th century, panels were the normal form of support for a painting not painted directly onto a wall (known as a fresco) or vellum, which was used for miniatures in illuminated manuscripts and paintings for the framing.

Albrech Durer is a well known artist of the Northern Italian Renaissance who found a patron in Emperor Maximillian I. Durer. Like most painters during this time period, Durer painted on wood panels.

Albrecht Durer, Self Portrait, 1500.: This self portrait of Albrecht Durer was painted on a wood panel, as the canvas had yet to become the prevalent medium of choice.

German Painting in the Northern Renaissance

The German Renaissance is reflective of Italian and German influence in its paintings, and one is not present without the other.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the work of Dürer, Grünewald, Holbein, Altdorfer, and other artists of the Danube school during the Holy Roman Empire in Germany

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Albrecht Dürer ‘s work shows strong classical influence due, in part, to his travels to the Italian peninsula.
- Matthias Grünewald combined Gothic and Renaissance attributes in his painted work on the *Isenheim Altarpiece* .
- The Danube School is known for the first productions of painted landscapes (independent of foreground figures) in nearly 1,000 years.
- Hans Holbein the Elder and his brother Sigismund Holbein painted religious works in the late Gothic style . The former was a pioneer and leader in the transformation of German art from the Gothic to the Renaissance style.
- The outstanding achievements of the first half of the 16th century were followed by a remarkable absence of noteworthy German art.

Key Terms

- **perspective**: The illusion of distance or depth on a two-dimensional surface.

- **en plein air**: In an outdoor setting, as opposed to in a studio or other interior location.
- **polyptych**: An artwork, usually a painting, consisting of four or more panels.
- **Classical ornament**: Influenced by the Roman motif in style.

Albrecht Dürer

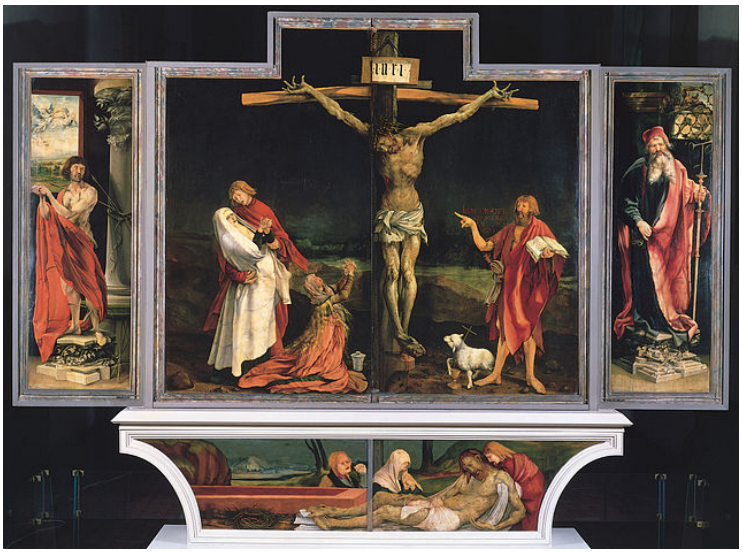
One of a small number of Germans with the means to travel internationally, Nuremberg born Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) helped bring the artistic styles of the Renaissance north of the Italian Alps after his visits to the Italian peninsula in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Like the Italian artists Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarotti, Dürer was a Renaissance Man, adept in multiple disciplines such as painting, printmaking , and mathematical theorizing. Dürer's introduction of classical motifs into Northern art has secured his reputation as one of the most important figures of the Northern Renaissance . This is reinforced by his theoretical treatises, which involve principles of mathematics, perspective , and ideal proportions.

One of Dürer's paintings that display a clearly classical rendering of the body is *Adam and Eve* (1507), the first full-scale nude subjects in German painting. A clear departure from flat and stylized representations of the Romanesque and Gothic periods, the bodies appear naturalistic and dynamic, with each figure posed in an engaging contrapposto pose. Although they stand against a black background, the ground on which both figures stand and the tree that flanks Eve comprise naturalistic landscape elements. Likely the first landscape painter in Early Modern Europe, Dürer honed his landscape painting skills working *en plein air* at home and during his travels.

Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*: Oil on panel. 1507. Two panels, each 209 cm × 81 cm (82 in × 32 in) Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Matthias Grünewald

Lying somewhat outside these developments is Matthias Grünewald, whose birthplace is located in eastern France and who left very few works. However, his *Isenheim Altarpiece* (1512–1516), produced in collaboration with Niclaus of Haguenau, has been widely regarded as the greatest German Renaissance painting since it was restored to critical attention in the 19th century. It is an intensely emotional work that continues the German Gothic tradition of unrestrained gesture and expression, using Renaissance compositional principles while maintaining the Gothic format of the multi-winged polyptych .



Matthias Grünewald, Isenheim Altarpiece (closed): Oil on panel (exterior). Wooden relief sculptures (interior). 1512–16. Unterlinden Museum, Colmar, Alsace.

In its closed form , the *Isenheim Altarpiece* depicts an emaciated Christ whose skin bears many dark spots. Its lower panel, which houses relief sculptures displayed on certain feast days, opens in a manner that makes the legs of Christ, being entombed, appear amputated. Not surprisingly, Grünewald produced the altarpiece for a chapel in an infirmary that treated patients with a variety of diseases, including ergotism and isolated remaining strains of the plague. A primary symptom of both diseases was painful sores on the skin. In some cases of ergotism, limbs developed gangrene and had to be amputated. Through the skin sores and seemingly amputated legs, Grünewald informs the viewer that Christ understands and feels the suffering of the sick. Such "humanization" of Biblical figures became common throughout Europe during the Renaissance in an effort to make them more relatable to worshippers.

The Danube School

Albrecht Altdorfer's (c.1480–1538) *Danube Landscape near Regensburg* (c. 1528) is one of the earliest Western pure landscapes. The Danube School is the name of a circle of artists from the southern German-speaking states active during the first third of the 16th century in Bavaria and Austria, including Albrecht Altdorfer, Wolf Huber, and Augustin Hirschvogel. With Altdorfer in the lead, the school produced the first examples of independent landscape art in the West (nearly 1,000 years after China), in both paintings and prints. Their religious paintings had an expressionist style somewhat similar to Grünewald's. Dürer's pupils Hans Burgkmair and Hans Baldung Grien worked largely in prints, with Baldung developing the topical subject matter of witches in a number of enigmatic prints.

Albrecht Altdorfer (c.1480–1538), Danube landscape near Regensburg (c. 1528): One of the earliest Western pure landscapes, from the Danube School in southern Germany.

Hans Holbein the Elder

Hans Holbein the Elder and his brother Sigismund Holbein painted richly colored religious works. His later paintings show how he pioneered and led the transformation of German art from the (Late) International Gothic to the Renaissance style. Holbein the Elder was a pioneer and leader in the transformation of German art from the Gothic to the Renaissance style. His son, Hans Holbein the Younger, was an important painter of portraits and a few religious works, working mainly in England and Switzerland.

Hans Holbein the Elder, Dormition of the Virgin: Oil on panel. c. 1491. Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.

The outstanding achievements of the first half of the 16th century were followed by a remarkable absence of noteworthy German art. The next significant German artists worked in the rather artificial style of Northern Mannerism , which they had to learn in Italy or Flanders . Hans von Aachen and the Netherlandish Bartholomeus Spranger were the leading painters at the Imperial courts in Vienna and Prague, and the productive Netherlandish Sadeler family of engravers spread out across Germany, among other counties.

Spanish Painting in the Northern Renaissance

Spanish art of the Northern Renaissance was influenced by Netherlandish painting, due to shared economic and political connections.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the Golden Age of Spain as manifested through painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Spain was an extremely devout country and Spanish painting in the 16th century exhibited a sense of religious intensity .
- El Greco was one of the most important and distinctive artists to emerge during the Spanish Golden Age.
- Mannerism was the dominant style of painting for most of the 16th century.

Key Terms

- **intensity**: The degree of depth, strength, or brilliance of a color or light.
- **sfumato**: In painting, the application of subtle layers of translucent paint so that there is no visible transition between colors, tones, and often objects.
- **Mannerism**: A style of art developed at the end of the High Renaissance, characterized by the deliberate distortion and exaggeration of perspective, especially the elongation of figures.

Influence of the Netherlands

Due to important economic and political links between Spain and the Netherlands (which included present-day Holland and Belgium) from the mid-15th century onwards, the early Renaissance in Spain was heavily influenced by Netherlandish painting, leading to the identification of a Hispano-Netherlandish school of painters. Overall the Renaissance and subsequent Mannerist styles are difficult to categorize in Spain, due to the mix of Netherlandish and Italian influences, and regional variations.

Apart from technical aspects, the themes and spirit of the Renaissance were modified to the Spanish culture and religious environment. Consequently, very few classical subjects or female nudes were depicted. Rather, the works frequently exhibited a sense of pious devotion and religious intensity—attributes that would remain dominant in much art of Counter Reformation Spain throughout the 17th century and beyond.

Spanish Golden Age

The Spanish Golden Age, a period of Spanish political ascendancy and subsequent decline, saw a great development of art in Spain. The period is generally considered to have begun at some point after 1492 and ended by or with the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659; in art the start is delayed until the reign of Philip III (1598–1621) or just before, and the end is also delayed until the 1660s or later.

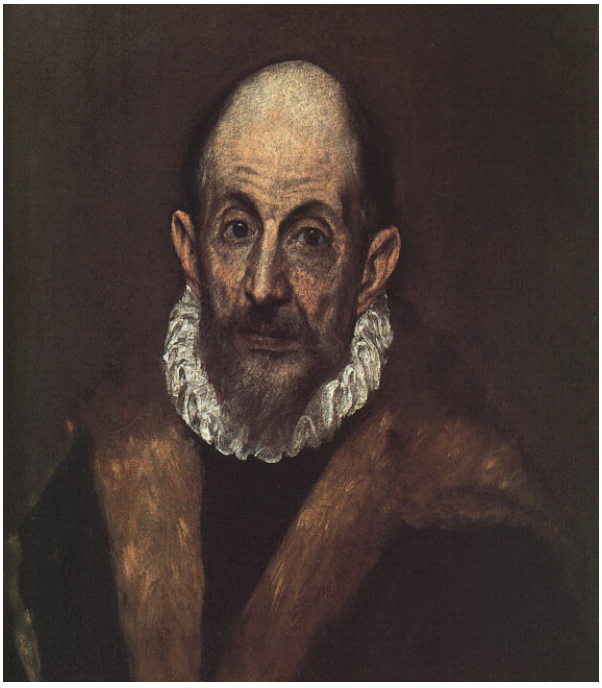
Luis de Morales

The most popular Spanish painter of the early 16th century was Luis de Morales (c. 1510–1586), called “The Divine” by his contemporaries, because of the religious intensity of his paintings. From the Renaissance style, he also frequently used *sfumato* modeling, and simple compositions but combined them with Netherlandish style precision of details. His subjects included many devotional images, including the *Madonna and Child*.

Luis de Morales, *Madonna and Child*: Oil on canvas. 1586. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

El Greco

Doménikos Theotokópoulos, better known as El Greco (1541–1614) “the Greek,” was one of the most individualistic of the painters of the period, developing a strongly Mannerist style based on his origins in the post-Byzantine Cretan school, in contrast to the naturalistic approaches then predominant in Seville, Madrid, and elsewhere in Spain.



Portrait of a Man by El Greco, 1604: This is presumably a self-portrait by the great Spanish Mannerist.

Universally known for his great impact in bringing the Italian Renaissance to Spain, El Greco studied the great Italian masters of his time—Titian, Tintoretto, and Michelangelo—when he lived in Italy from 1568 to 1577. Many of his works reflect the silvery grays and strong colors of Venetian painters such as Titian, while adding strange elongations of figures, unusual lighting, disposing of perspective space , and filling the surface with very visible and expressive brushwork. Although his signature style would eventually become renowned and influence later artists, during his lifetime, El Greco received harsh criticism in his native Crete and his adopted country of Spain for not conforming to stylistic norms.

In 1577, El Greco relocated to Spain, where he produced his mature works. His mature style is characterized by a tendency to dramatize rather than to describe. The strong spiritual emotion transfers from painting directly to the audience. El Greco's preference for exceptionally tall and slender figures and elongated compositions, which served both his expressive purposes and aesthetic principles, led him to disregard the laws of nature and elongate his compositions to ever greater extents, particularly when they were destined for altarpieces .

The Disrobing of Christ (El Espolio) by El Greco, 1577–79: Oil on canvas. Sacristy of the Cathedral, Toledo. This is one of the most famous altarpieces by El Greco. His altarpieces are renowned for their dynamic compositions and startling innovations.

A significant innovation of El Greco's mature works is the interweaving between form and space. A reciprocal relationship is developed between the two that completely unifies the painting surface. This interweaving would re-emerge three centuries later in the works of Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso .

El Greco's most famous painting, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (1586–88) blends his signature style with the classical revival of the Renaissance and medieval renderings of the body. The lower register represents the earthly plane in which mourners gather for the count's burial. The count, the mourners, and most of the clergy are rendered in a manner that acknowledge the body beneath the clothing. However, the two high-ranking clergy members burying the body, as well as the one reading the sermon on the right, wear bulky garments that do not acknowledge the body, as figures were often depicted in the Middle Ages . On the upper register, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and a host of members of the heavenly court gather to welcome the count's soul (the kneeling semi-naked man in a loincloth) to heaven. In this other worldy depiction, El Greco has elongated the bodies and filled negative spaces with sweeping, expressive lines and forms to create a sense of drama.

The Burial of the Count of Orgaz by El Greco: Now El Greco's best known work, this painting illustrates a popular local legend. It is clearly divided into two zones: the heavenly above and the terrestrial below, brought together compositionally.

English Painting in the Northern Renaissance

The Tudor period was, for England, one of isolation from European trends.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the paintings produced under the Tudor dynasty in England

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In the Tudor period, foreign artists were recruited and often welcomed lavishly by the English court.
- The Netherlandish painters remained predominant, though French influence was also important for Lucas Horenbout and Nicholas Hilliard. Despite a growing influence of classicism on the continent, Horenbout's early miniatures of the royal family show a strong influence of illuminated manuscript styles .
- The German artist Hans Holbein the Younger was probably the best known painter of the court of Henry VIII. His double portrait *The Ambassadors* foreshadows the increasingly secular subject matter of English painting.
- With the virtual extinction of religious painting during the Reformation , and little interest in classical mythology until the very end of the period, the portrait was the most important form of painting for all the artists of the Tudor court, and the only one to have survived in any numbers.
- A portrait of Elizabeth I as a princess is largely absent of religious symbolism despite its sitter's future role as Defender of the Faith. Although the style of the portrait bears striking similarities to contemporary royal portraits produced in France, the sitter's status as a female future sovereign was unique for its time.

Key Terms

- **limner**: A painter who specializes in the production of portrait miniatures.
- **Tudors**: A European royal house of Welsh origin that ruled the Kingdom of England and its realms, including the Lordship of Ireland (later the Kingdom of Ireland) from 1485 until 1603.

Art of the Tudor Court

The artists of the Tudor court were the painters and limners engaged by the English monarchs' Tudor dynasty and their courtiers between 1485 and 1603 (from the reign of Henry VII to the death of Elizabeth I). Typically managing a group of assistants and

apprentices in a workshop or studio, many of these artists produced works across several disciplines, including portrait miniatures, large-scale panel portraits on wood, and illuminated manuscripts.

The Tudor period was, for England, one of unusual isolation from European trends. At the start, the Wars of the Roses had greatly disrupted artistic activity, which apart from architecture had reached a very low ebb by 1485. In the Tudor period, foreign artists were recruited and often welcomed lavishly by the English court, as they were in other artistically marginal parts of Europe like Spain or Naples. The Netherlandish painters remained predominant, though French influence was also important for both Lucas Horenbout, trained in illuminated manuscripts, and Nicholas Hilliard, the founder and greatest exponent of the distinctively English tradition of the portrait miniature. Horenbout's portrait miniature of Katharine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII, with its relatively flat subject matter and gold outlines , bears a closer resemblance to illuminated manuscripts than to the realistically modeled classical style appearing elsewhere in Europe at the time.

Katharine of Aragon with a Monkey by Lucas Horenbout, 1525–26. Miniature.

The Court of Henry VIII

Possibly the best known painter employed in the court of Henry VIII was the German artist Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), who worked in the style of the Northern Renaissance . His portraits of the royal family and nobles are a record of the court in the years when the king was asserting his supremacy over the English church. By 1533, when Holbein painted his famous double portrait *The Ambassadors*, Henry VIII had severed the Church of England from Rome when the Pope refused to allow the king to divorce Katharine of Aragon and marry Anne Boelyn.

The Ambassadors by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533: Oil on panel. National Gallery, London.

Although Holbein's sitters Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve were ordained Catholic priests from France, religious symbolism in the painting is significantly subordinated. Almost hidden behind the green curtain in the upper left-hand corner is a crucifix. On the second level of the table between the ambassadors is a lute (typically a symbol of harmony) with a broken string, symbolizing the separation of the English church from Roman Catholicism. The book in front of it provides an explanation for the discord, as it is opened to a hymn to Martin Luther, who began the Protestant Reformation . Unlike Holbein's native land, in which Lutheranism permitted a certain degree of religious imagery , the subject matter in *The Ambassadors* foreshadows the new direction in religious austerity in English art as Catholicism became less tolerated.

The Court of Elizabeth I

With the virtual extinction of religious painting during the Reformation and little interest in classical mythology until the very end of the period, the portrait was the most important form of painting for all the artists of the Tudor court, and the only form to have survived in any numbers. How many of these have also been lost can be seen from Holbein's book (nearly all pages in the Royal Collection), containing preparatory drawings for portraits. Of 85 drawings, only a handful have surviving Holbein paintings, though often copies have survived. Portraiture ranged from the informal miniature—almost invariably painted from life in the course of a few days and intended for private contemplation—to the later large-scale portraits of Elizabeth I, such as the *Rainbow Portrait*, filled with symbolic iconography in dress, jewels, background, and inscription.

The Rainbow Portrait by Isaac Oliver c. 1600.: This portrait of Elizabeth I as the “Queen of Love and Beauty” epitomizes the elaborate iconography associated with later Tudor court portraiture.

Elizabeth I took a personal interest in painting, keeping her own collection of miniatures locked away, wrapped in paper on which she wrote the names of the sitter. She is reputed to have had paintings of her burnt that did not match the iconic image she wished to be shown. One portrait that she did retain was painted before she ascended the throne. *Elizabeth I as Princess* (c. 1546), once attributed to William Scrots but now believed to have been painted by Levinia Teerlinc, depicts a young literate woman standing erect and exchanging her gaze with the viewer in the confident manner in which Jean Clouet painted François I of France. Whereas Holbein subordinates the crucifix in *The Ambassadors*, the only hint at religious symbolism in this portrait of the future Defender of the Faith are the abstract cruciform designs on her brooch and her belt. The book in her hand and on the easel behind her bear no title or writing, allowing them to be interpreted as secular literature, as opposed to Biblical scripture.

Elizabeth I as Princess by Levinia Teerlinc [?], c. 1546: Oil on panel. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle.

While the portrait style of the classically rendered confident sitter against a decorative background shows French influence, the gender of the sitter was unique to England at the time. Because Henry VIII's only surviving son had died during his adolescence, the English law of succession had to be amended to allow Elizabeth and her elder sister Mary access to the throne. Later portraits of Elizabeth would often depict her holding a globe in her hand to symbolize her growing international power in an age of exploration and conquest. In France, on the other hand, women were barred from serving as sovereign rulers and would never be pictured as possessing such power.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- El Descendimiento, by Rogier van der Weyden, from Prado in Google Earth. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:El_Descendimiento,_by_Rogier_van_der_Weyden,_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Merodealtarpiece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Merodealtarpiece.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lamgods open. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lamgods_open.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Descent from the Cross (van der Weyden). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Descent_from_the_Cross_(van_der_Weyden). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dutch and Flemish Renaissance painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_and_Flemish_Renaissance_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ARTH111: Introduction to Western Art History - Proto-Renaissance to Contemporary Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: https://legacy.saylor.org/arth111/Intro/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Jan van Eyck. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_van_Eyck. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Netherlandish painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Netherlandish_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rogier van der Weyden. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogier_van_der_Weyden. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Robert Campin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Campin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Northern Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Northern Renaissance. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/HIST302-8.3.1-Northern-Renaissance-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- triptych. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/triptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tempera. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tempera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- polyptych. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/polyptych. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Durer_selfporitrait.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-Portrait_(D%C3%BCrer,_Munich). **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- German art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/German_art%23Renaissance_painting_and_prints. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- International Gothic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/International%20Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Holy Roman Emperor. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy%20Roman%20Emperor. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Grunewald_Isenheim1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=128080%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 382px-Albrecht_Du00fcrer_-_Adam_and_Eve_(Prado)_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=150385%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Hans_Holbein_the_Elder_-_The_Dormition_of_the_Virgin_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22007482. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Albrecht Altdorfer 007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Albrecht_Altdorfer_007.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Albrecht Altdorfer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Albrecht_Altdorfer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Albrecht Du00fcrer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/7CkJnd. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Classical Ornament in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/classical-ornament. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hans Holbein the Elder. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Holbein_the_Elder. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Adam and Eve (Du00fcrer). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/ANhrBH. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Isenheim Altarpiece. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Isenheim_Altarpiece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Matthias Gru00fcnewald. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/p9nnMG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- German Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/German_art%23Renaissance_painting_and_prints. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 392px-El_Greco_-_The_Burial_of_the_Count_of_Orgaz.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1170096%20. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- El Greco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 279px-El_Expolio,_por_El_Greco.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46661432. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 361px-Luis_de_Morales_001.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=155900. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Disrobing of Christ. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Disrobing_of_Christ. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Spanish Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_art%23Renaissance_and_Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- El Greco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Luis de Morales. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_de_Morales. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spanish Golden Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Golden_Age%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sfumato. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sfumato. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Definition of Intensity in Art History. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/definition/intensity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Horenbout_Catherine_of_Aragon_with_a_monkey.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2910125. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 487px-Hans_Holbein_the_Younger_-_The_Ambassadors_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22354806. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 364px-Elizabeth_I_when_a_Princess.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=686176. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Elizabeth I Rainbow Portrait. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elizabeth_I_Rainbow_Portrait.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Portraiture of Elizabeth I of England. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Portraiture_of_Elizabeth_I_of_England. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Levinia Teerlinc. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Levina_Teerlinc. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hans Holbein the Younger. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Holbein_the_Younger. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lucas Hornebout. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucas_Horenbout. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art in the Elizabethan Era. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_in_the_Elizabethan_era. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tudors. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudors. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Portrait Miniatures. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/portrait%20miniatures. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 20.2: Painting in the Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

20.3: Books of the Northern Renaissance

Illuminated Manuscripts

During the early to mid 1400s, illuminated books were considered a high art form, and Burgundy (Flanders) was a center of such production.

Learning Objectives

Examine the market for illuminated manuscripts in northern Europe during the Gothic period and how it changed

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Illuminated manuscripts included religious works such the books of hours and prayer books, but also histories, tales of adventure and love, poetry, and a wide range of moralizing works that we might classify as self-improvement books today.
- By the 14th century, the production of luxury manuscripts by monks writing in the monastic scriptorium had almost fully given way to commercial urban scriptoria, especially in Paris, Rome , and Burgundy.
- At the time illuminated manuscripts were considered treasured works of high craft; to own books indicated wealth, status, and taste. In addition books were commonly used as diplomatic gifts or as offerings to commemorate dynastic marriages.
- In the 1440s the cities of Bruges and Ghent became the most important centers of production of illuminated manuscripts, in part due to the patronage of the cultured Philip the Good , who by his death had collected over 1,000 individual books.
- Simon Marmion was perhaps the best known and most successful artist specializing in this area, although van Eyck is thought to have contributed to the “Turin-Milan Hours” as the anonymous artist known as Hand G.

Key Terms

- **scriptoria**: Rooms set aside for the copying, writing, or illuminating of manuscripts and records, especially in monasteries.
- **illuminated manuscript**: A book in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.
- **Simon Marmion**: Born c. 1425 at Amiens, France, died 24 or 25 December 1489, Valenciennes. A French or Burgundian Early Netherlandish painter of panels and illuminated manuscripts. Marmion lived and worked in what is now France but for most of his lifetime was part of the Duchy of Burgundy in the Southern Netherlands.
- **Philip the Good**: July 31, 1396–June 15, 1467. Philip was Duke of Burgundy from 1419 until his death. He was a member of a cadet line of the Valois dynasty (the then Royal family of France). During his reign Burgundy reached the height of its prosperity and prestige and became a leading center of the arts.

Illumination in a Gothic World

The Gothic period, which generally saw an increase in the production of illuminated manuscripts, also saw more secular works such as chronicles and works of literature illuminated. Wealthy people began to build up personal libraries. Philip the Bold probably had the largest personal library of his time in the mid-15th century; he is estimated to have had about 600 illuminated manuscripts, while a number of his friends and relations had several dozen.

Monastic Production of Luxury Books

During the early to mid 1400s, illuminated books were considered a higher art form than panel painting. While they had traditionally been created in monasteries, by the 12th century levels of demand led to their production in specialist workshops known in French as *libraires*. The works included religious works such the books of hours and prayer books, but also histories, tales of adventure and love, poetry, and a wide range of moralizing works that we might classify as self-improvement books today.

Urban Scriptoria

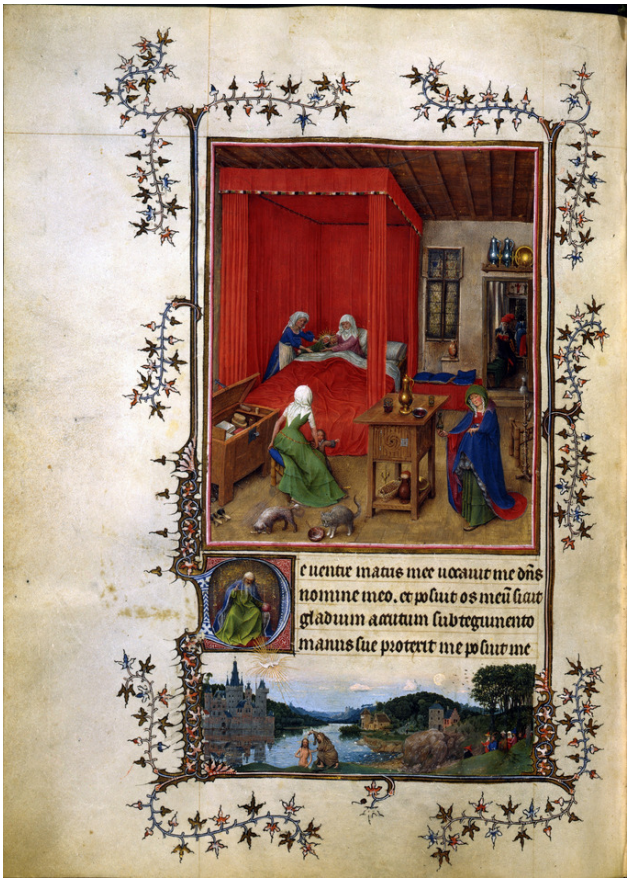
By the 14th century, the production of luxury manuscripts by monks writing in the monastic scriptorium had almost fully given way to commercial urban scriptoria, especially in Paris, Rome, and Burgundy. While the process of creating an illuminated

manuscript did not change, the move from monasteries to commercial settings was a radical step. Demand for manuscripts grew to such an extent that the monastic libraries were unable to meet with the demand, and began employing secular scribes and illuminators. These individuals often lived close to the monastery and, in certain instances, dressed as monks whenever they entered the monastery, but were allowed to leave at the end of the day. In reality, illuminators were often well-known and acclaimed and many of their identities have survived.

At the time illuminated manuscripts were considered treasured works of high craft; to own books indicated wealth, status, and taste. In addition, they became common as diplomatic gifts, or offerings to commemorate dynastic marriages. Paris was the major source of supply after their production spread from the monasteries. However, its importance was supplanted in the 1440s by the cities of Bruges and Ghent, in part due to the patronage of the cultured Philip the Good, who by his death had collected over 1,000 individual books. When in the early to mid-15th century manuscripts were held in higher regard than panel paintings, masters would often produce single leaf illustrations to be almost randomly inserted into precious books, as a means for the master to display and advertise his skill.

Outstanding Illuminators

Simon Marmion was perhaps the best known and most successful artist specializing in this area, although van Eyck is thought to have contributed to the *Turin-Milan Hours* as the anonymous artist known as Hand G. A number of illustrations from the period show a strong stylistic resemblance to the work of Gerard David, though it is unclear whether they are by his hand or by his followers. There was considerable overlap between panel painting and illumination, and by the second half of the century large manuscript commissions were often shared between several different masters, with more junior painters, including many women, assisting, especially in producing the increasingly elaborate border decoration.



Page from the “Turin-Milan Hours,” anonymous artist known as Hand G.: The Birth of John the Baptist (top image) and the Baptism of Christ (bottom image) by “Hand G” Turin.

German Woodcuts

Printmaking by woodcut and engraving was already more developed in Germany and the Low Countries than anywhere else during the Renaissance.

Learning Objectives

Discuss German woodcuts of the 16th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Printmaking by woodcut and engraving was already more developed in Germany and the Low Countries than anywhere else, and the Germans took the lead in developing book illustrations.
- Martin Schongauer (c.1450–1491) is credited as the first artist to create an engraving.
- The most well-known artist of the German Renaissance is Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), who worked as a printmaker and engraver.

Key Terms

- **woodcut**: A print or a method of printmaking from an engraved block of wood.
- **engraving**: The practice of incising a design onto a hard, flat surface by cutting grooves into it.
- **Albrecht Dürer**: (1471–1528) A German painter, printmaker, mathematician, and theorist from Nuremberg, often regarded as the greatest artist of the Northern Renaissance.

Woodcuts and Engraving

Printmaking by woodcut and engraving was already more developed in Germany and the Low Countries than anywhere else during the Renaissance. The Germans took the lead in developing book illustrations. These were typically of a relatively low artistic standard, but were seen all over Europe, with the woodblocks often being lent to printers of editions in other cities or languages.

Martin Schongauer

Martin Schongauer (c. 1450–1491), from Southern Germany, is credited as the first artist to create an engraving; he was also a well-known painter. He is known for further developing the engraving methods by refining the cross-hatching technique to depict volume and shade. Another notable German printmaker is known as the “Housebook Master.” His prints were made in drypoint: he scratched his lines on the plate, leaving them much more shallow than they would be with an engraving.

***The Fifth Foolish Virgin,* engraving by Martin Schongauer, 1483.**

Albrecht Dürer

The greatest artist of the German Renaissance, Albrecht Dürer, began his career as an apprentice to a leading workshop in Nuremberg, that of Michael Wolgemut, who had largely abandoned his painting to exploit the new medium . Dürer worked on the most extravagantly illustrated book of the period, *The Nuremberg Chronicle*, published by his godfather Anton Koberger, Europe's largest printer-publisher at the time.

After completing his apprenticeship in 1490, Dürer traveled in Germany for four years and to Italy for a few months before establishing his own workshop in Nuremberg. He rapidly became famous all over Europe for his energetic and balanced woodcuts and engravings; he also continued his painting during this period.

***Adam and Eve*, engraving by Albrecht Dürer.**

Block Books

The mass production of paper in 15th century Europe opened the door for the proliferation of printed books.

Learning Objectives

Describe the development of printed books in Northern Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Around 1450, small woodcut books called “block books,” or “xylographica,” came into prominence and began to be reproduced in large numbers. They are believed to have been less expensive than books printed with moveable type.
- Block books were short books consisting of up to 50 leaves. They were printed with woodcuts carved to include both text and imagery and were nearly always religious in nature.
- The most renowned block book is titled the *Ars Moriendi*, or *The Art of Dying*. This block book was from the Netherlands and was reprinted in several editions with different illustrations.
- The *Biblia Pauperum* involved visual depictions relating the Old Testament to the New Testament and often placed the illustrations in the center with very little additional text. Whenever writing did appear, it was in the vernacular language, as opposed to Latin.
- Unlike typical polychromatic prints, polychromatic block books were printed with a single block and subsequently hand painted.

Key Terms

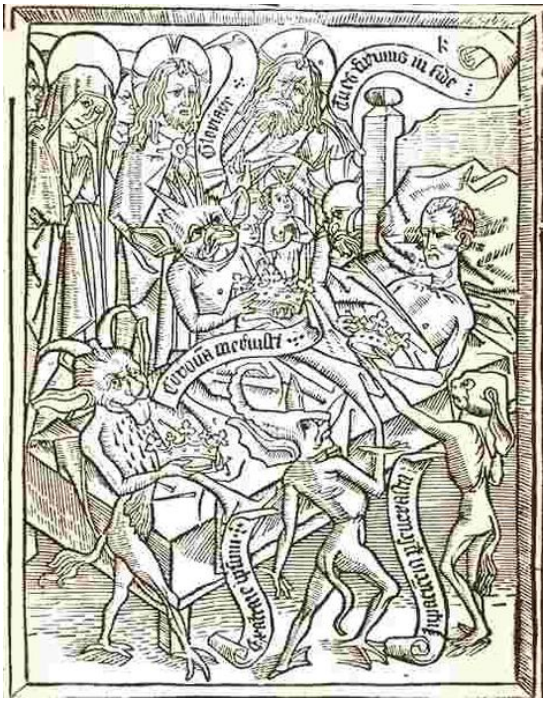
- **Pigment**: Powdered coloring material that forms the basis of painting, drawing, and printing media.
- **polychromatic**: Multi-colored.
- **monochromatic**: Black and white, or using one color.

- **woodcut**: A method of relief printing in which the image is carved into the smooth side of a wooden block.

The increasing mass production of paper, coupled with the invention of the printing press in 15th century Europe, opened the doors for the proliferation of printed books. Woodcut printing on textiles had been practiced in Europe for some time when paper became more affordable and readily available. Around 1450, small woodcut books called “block books” or “xylographica” came into prominence and were reproduced in large numbers. Block books were short books consisting of up to 50 leaves block-printed with woodcuts carved to include both text and imagery. These books were aimed at a general audience and were often popular titles, nearly always religious in nature, and sometimes reprinted into multiple editions. Germany and Northern Europe were important centers for the spread and development of printed works during the 15th and 16th centuries.

It is widely believed that block books existed as a cheaper alternative to the movable-type printed book, which was in use but still very expensive. Research has uncovered over 40 titles, with a much smaller number ranking among the most popular. The most popular texts were reprinted many times, often using new woodcuts copying the earlier versions. Block books were typically printed as folios, with two pages printed on one full sheet of paper, which was then folded once for binding. Several such leaves were then inserted inside another to form a gathering of leaves, one or more of which would be sewn together to form the complete book. Some block books, called “chiro-xylographic,” were printed with only illustrations, and then the type was filled in by hand. Block books are considered *incunabula* (or “incunable”), a term referring to a book, pamphlet, or broadside printed before the year 1501 in Europe.

The most renowned block book is the *Ars Moriendi*, or *The Art of Dying*, from the Netherlands. It was reprinted in several editions with different illustrations. There was originally a “long version” and a later “short version” containing 11 woodcut pictures as instructive images that could be easily explained and memorized. It was written within the historical context of the effects of the macabre horrors of the Black Death 60 years earlier and consequent social upheavals of the 15th century. It was very popular, translated into most West European languages, and was the first in a Western literary tradition of guides to death and dying.



A Print from the *Ars Moriendi*: The *Ars Moriendi* is the most renowned block book.

The *Biblia Pauperum*, or *Pauper's Bible*, was also a popular series that had existed previously in the 14th century as illuminated manuscripts , hand-painted on vellum , before woodcuts took over. A *Biblia Pauperum* included visual depictions that related the Old Testament to the New Testament, often placing the illustrations in the center with very little additional text. When text did appear in the *Biblia Pauperum*, it was usually in the local vernacular language, rather than Latin. Each group of images is dedicated to one event from the Gospels, which is accompanied by two slightly smaller pictures of Old Testament events that prefigure the

central one, according to belief of medieval theologians. Other notable *Biblia paupera* include the Gutenberg Bible of 1455, as well as the *incunabula* of 1486, printed and illustrated by Erhard Reuwich.

Woodblock Print from a *Biblia Pauperum*: Three episodes from the block book *Biblia Pauperum* illustrating typological correspondences between the Old and New Testaments: Eve and the serpent, the Annunciation, and Gideon's miracle.

Polychromatic block books were produced in addition to the monochromatic ones. Whereas most polychromatic prints required a separate printing surface for each color used, polychromatic block books were colored by hand. Pigments ranged from plant materials, such as ochre (red and yellow), to more chemically-derived ones, such as cobalt (blue). Various insect species were also used for a variety of red values . Since block books were less expensive than traditional illuminated manuscripts, artists colored the images exclusively in paints and inks, as opposed to gilding.

Polychromatic page from the Apocalypse, c. 1450–1500: Heavy areas of color and modeling, which obscure the outlines and contour lines, point to evidence of hand-coloring, as opposed to using a separate block for each color. The printed text is in Latin but handwritten German translation sheets were inserted between the block book pages.

Most of the earliest block books are believed to have been printed in the Netherlands, while the later ones are thought to be from Southern Germany. Specifically, Nuremberg, Ulm, Augsburg, and Schwaben were notable locations for the development of print media in the 15th and 16th centuries.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 14th-century painters - Les Tru00e8s Belles Heures de Notre Dame de Jean de Berry - WGA16014. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:14th-century_painters_-_Les_Tr%C3%A8s_Belles_Heures_de_Notre_Dame_de_Jean_de_Berry_-_WGA16014.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- illuminated manuscript. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/illuminated%20manuscript. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Early Netherlandish painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Netherlandish_painting%23Illuminated_manuscripts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Illuminated manuscript. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuminated_manuscript. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- scriptoria. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/scriptoria. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Simon Marmion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon%20Marmion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Philip the Good. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip%20the%20Good. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer%2C_Adam_and_Eve%2C_1504%2C_Engraving.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Martin_Schongauer_-_The_Fifth_Foolish_Virgin_-_WGA21028.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Schongauer. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- German art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/German_art%23Renaissance_painting_and_prints. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Matthias Grunewald. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthias%20Grunewald. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Albrecht Durer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Albrecht%20Durer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Martin Luther. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin%20Luther. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 359px-Apocalypse.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7751217. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ars.moriendi.pride.a. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ars.moriendi.pride.a.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- BibliaPauperum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BibliaPauperum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Block Book. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Block_book. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ars Moriendi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ars_moriendi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Biblia Pauperum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblia_pauperum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Illuminated Manuscript. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuminated_manuscript. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Old Master Print. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_master_print. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Woodcut. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/woodcut. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 20.3: Books of the Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

20.4: Architecture of the Northern Renaissance

Chartreuse de Champmol

The Chartreuse de Champmol, a Carthusian monastery on the outskirts of Dijon, represents the finest monumental work of early modern France.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how the Carthusian monastery Chartreuse de Champmol became “the grandest project in a reign renowned for extravagance” under the Valois dynasty of Burgundy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Champmol was intended to rival Cîteaux, Saint-Denis, where the Kings of France were buried, and other dynastic burial places.
- Champmol was lavishly enriched with works of art, and the dispersed remnants of its collection remain key to the understanding of the art of the period.
- The monastery was founded in 1383 by Duke Philip the Bold to provide a dynastic burial place for the Valois Dukes of Burgundy, and operated until it was dissolved in 1791, during the French Revolution .
- In 1395, Claes Sluter began work on the *Well of Moses*, which combines International Gothic with northern realism . However, the monumentality of the sculptures is unprecedented in either style .
- The interior of the church features the elaborate tombs of John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria, each of which is supported by a sculpture group of *pleurants* (mourners) whose expressions of grief are unprecedented for their time.

Key Terms

- **Carthusian monastery**: The building, or complex of buildings, comprising the domestic quarters and workplace(s) of monastics, whether monks or nuns, and whether living in community or alone (hermits). The monastery generally includes a place reserved for prayer, which may be a chapel, church or temple, and may also serve as an oratory.
- **Valois**: A cadet branch of the Capetian dynasty, succeeding the House of Capet (or “Direct Capetians”) as kings of France from 1328 to 1589. A cadet branch of the family reigned as dukes of Burgundy from 1363 to 1482. They were descendants of Charles of Valois, the fourth son of King Philip III. They based their claim on the Salic law, which excluded females (Joan II of Navarre) as well as male descendants through the distaff line (Edward III of England), from the succession to the French throne.

Monastic Splendor

The Chartreuse de Champmol, formally the Chartreuse de la Sainte-Trinité de Champmol, was a Carthusian monastery on the outskirts of Dijon, which is now in France, but in the 15th century was the capital of the then-independent Duchy of Burgundy. The monastery was founded in 1383, by Duke Philip the Bold, to provide a dynastic burial place for the Valois Dukes of Burgundy, and operated until it was dissolved in 1791, during the French Revolution. It was lavishly enriched with works of art, and the dispersed remnants of its collection remain key to the understanding of the art of the period. Champmol was intended to rival Cîteaux, Saint-Denis, where the Kings of France were buried, and other dynastic burial places.

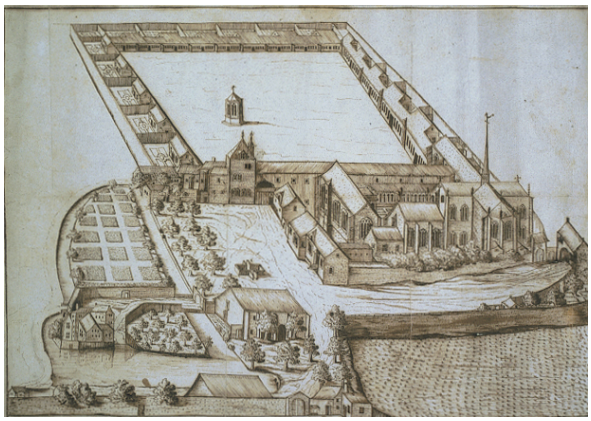
Purchase of the land and quarrying of materials began in 1377, but construction did not begin until 1383, under the architect Druet de Dammartin from Paris, who had previously designed the Duke’s chateau at Sluis, and worked as an assistant in the construction of the Louvre. A committee of counselors from Dijon supervised the construction for the often absent Duke. By 1388 the nearly completed church was consecrated. Claes Sluter and his workshop produced sculptures of Philip and his wife kneeling in prayer toward the central sculpture of the Madonna and Child for the church’s main portal .

Claes Sluter. West portal of the church: Sculptures of Philip the Bold (left) and his wife (right) kneeling before the Madonna and Child.

The monastery was built for 24 choir monks, instead of the usual 12 in a Carthusian house. Its cloister surrounded a courtyard in which Sluter constructed the *Well of Moses* (1395–1403), whose monumental sculptures combine the International Gothic style with a northern realism. Their scale, however, is unprecedented in either style. The figures range from the namesake of the well to Old Testament prophets to the Crucifixion. Although it was intended to function as a fountain, the water feature was abandoned so as not to conflict with the monks' vow of silence.

Claes Sluter. Well of Moses: The base of the Well of Moses shows the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ.

In 1433, two more monks were endowed to celebrate the birth of Charles the Bold. These lived semi-hermitic lives in their individual small houses when not in the chapel. Other inhabitants of the monastery included non-ordained monks, servants, novices, and other workers.



Champmol in 1686: This drawing shows the cottage-like hermitages of the monks surrounding the main cloister, with the Well of Moses in the middle.

A Ducal Symbol

Somewhat in contradiction to the Carthusian mission of tranquil contemplation, the monastery welcomed visitors and pilgrims. The expenses of hospitality were then recompensed by the Dukes. In 1418, Papal indulgences were granted to those visiting the *Well of Moses*, further encouraging pilgrims. The Ducal family had a private oratory overlooking the church, which has since been destroyed, though their visits were in fact rare. Ducal accounts show major commissions for paintings and other works to complete the monastery continuing until about 1415. Further works were later added by the Dukes and other donors, although building progressed at a slower rate.

The Valois dynasty of Burgundy had less than a century to run when the monastery was founded. The number of Valois tombs never approached that of their Capetian predecessors at Cîteaux, as the choir of the church was not large enough to accommodate them. Only two monuments were ever erected, both in the same style, with painted alabaster effigies with lions at their feet and angels with spread wings at their heads. Underneath the slab on which the effigies rested, small unpainted *pleurants* (mourners) were set among Gothic tracery . They were, at the time of their production, the most moving representations of grief conveyed in a sculptural medium .

Pleurants (*Mourners*): Stone mourners at a tomb in Chartreuse de Champmol. Approximately 40 cm high.

Tomb of John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria: John the Fearless commissioned work on this tomb, though by his death in 1419, nothing had been done. The project saw several different artists at work until its completion in 1470.

Champmol was designed as a showpiece. The artistic contents, now dispersed, represent much of the finest monumental work of French and Burgundian art of the period, demonstrating a tradition distinct from that of the similarly prestigious illuminated manuscripts .

French Architecture in the Northern Renaissance

Francis I (1515–1547) brought about such huge cultural changes in France that he has been called France's original Renaissance monarch.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the advancements in architecture as seen under the reign of Francis I

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- At the time of the accession of Francis I, the royal palaces of France were ornamented with only a scattering of great paintings and devoid of sculpture. During his reign, the magnificent art collection of the French kings was begun.
- Francis poured vast amounts of money into new structures. He continued the work of his predecessors on the Château d'Amboise and also started renovations on the Château de Blois. Early in his reign, he also began construction of the magnificent Château de Chambord.

- Not a castle in the traditional military sense, the Château de Chambord was built as a hunting lodge for the king and contains unique architectural elements, such as towers without turrets and a double spiral staircase that extends through three stories.
- The largest building project under Francis's reign was at the Palace of Fontainebleau, where, it is said, the French Renaissance began.
- Francis employed some of the most famous artists from Europe to decorate Fontainebleau. They included Rosso Fiorentino, Francesco Primaticcio, and Benvenuto Cellini. Cellini designed the famous *Nymphe de Fontainebleau*.

Key Terms

- **patron**: An influential, wealthy person who supports an artist, craftsman, scholar, or aristocrat.
- **château**: French castle, fortress, manor house, or large country house.

Francis I: Patron of the Arts

Francis I (1494–1547) was King of France from 1515 until his death. During his reign, huge cultural changes took place in France. He has been called France's original Renaissance monarch. By the time he ascended the throne in 1515, the Renaissance had arrived in France, and Francis became a major patron of the arts. At the time of his accession, the royal palaces were ornamented with only a scattering of great paintings and no sculptures. During Francis's reign, the magnificent art collection of the French kings, which can still be seen at the Louvre, was begun.

Francis I by Jean Clouet (circa 1530): Portrait of Francis I. He was one of the great patrons of the arts in early modern Europe.

Francis poured vast amounts of money into new structures. He continued the work of his predecessors on the Château d'Amboise and also started renovations on the Château de Blois. Early in his reign, he began construction of the magnificent Château de Chambord, inspired by the styles of the Italian Renaissance and perhaps even designed by Leonardo da Vinci. Francis rebuilt the Château du Louvre, transforming it from a medieval fortress into a building of Renaissance splendor. He financed the building of a

new City Hall (Hôtel de Ville) for Paris in order to have control over the building's design. He constructed the Château de Madrid in the Bois de Boulogne and rebuilt the Château de St-Germain-en-Laye.

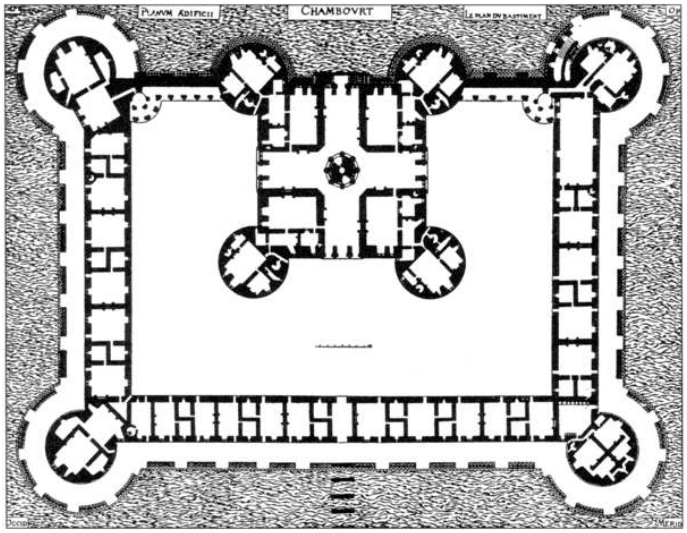
Châteaux in the 16th century departed from castle architecture. While they were offshoots of castles, with features commonly associated with them, they did not have serious defenses. Extensive gardens and water features, such as a moat, were common amongst châteaux from this period.

The Francis I wing of the Chateau de Blois: The Château de Blois's spiral staircase is one of the great artistic achievements of the French Renaissance under Francis I.

Château de Chambord

Château de Chambord, northwest façade: The Château de Chambord is an example of Renaissance architecture and is the largest castle of the Loire valley, measuring 156 meters long and topping 56 meters high.

Chambord is the largest château in the Loire Valley. It was built primarily as the king's hunting lodge. The layout is reminiscent of a typical castle with a keep , corner towers, and defended by a moat. Built in Renaissance style, the internal layout is an early example of the French and Italian style of grouping rooms into self-contained suites, a departure from the medieval style of corridor rooms. The massive château is composed of a central keep with four immense bastion towers at the corners. The keep also forms part of the front wall of a larger compound with two more large towers. Bases for a possible further two towers are found at the rear, but these were never developed, and remain the same height as the wall. The château features 440 rooms, 282 fireplaces, and 84 staircases. Four rectangular vaulted hallways on each floor form a cross shape.



Château de Chambord, plan: Plan of the château as engraved by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1576).

Like the Château de Blois, one of Chambord's architectural highlights is the spectacular open double spiral staircase. The two spirals ascend the three floors without ever meeting, illuminated from above by a sort of lighthouse at the highest point of the château.

Château de Chambord, double spiral staircase: The staircase extends upward through three stories.

Château of Fontainebleau

The largest of Francis's building projects was the reconstruction and expansion of the royal Château of Fontainebleau, which quickly became his favorite place of residence, as well as the residence of his official mistress (Anne, Duchess of Étampes). He commissioned the architect Gilles le Breton to build a château in the new Renaissance style. Le Breton preserved the old medieval *donjon*, where the king's apartments were located, but incorporated it into the new Renaissance style *Cour Ovale* (Oval Courtyard), built on the foundations of the old castle. It included monumental *Porte Dorée* (Golden Door), the main entrance, as its southern entrance, as well as a monumental Renaissance stairway, the *portique de Serlio*, to give access the royal apartments on the north side.

Gilles Le Breton. Cour Ovale. Château of Fontainebleau: The Oval Courtyard, with the Medieval donjon, a vestige of the original castle where the king's apartments were located, in the center.

Beginning in approximately 1528, Francis constructed the Gallery Francis I, which allowed him to pass directly from his apartments to the chapel of the Trinitaires. He brought the architect Sebastiano Serlio from Italy, and the Florentine painter Giovanni Battista di Jacopo, known as Rosso Fiorentino, to decorate the new gallery. Between 1533 and 1539 Rosso Fiorentino filled the gallery with murals glorifying the king, framed in stucco ornament in high relief , and *lambris* sculpted by the furniture maker Francesco Scibec da Carpi. Another Italian painter, Francesco Primaticcio from Bologna, joined later in the decoration of the château. Together their style of decoration became known as the first School of Fontainebleau. This was the first great decorated gallery built in France. Broadly speaking, at Fontainebleau the Renaissance was introduced to France.

Sebastiano Serlio and Rosso Fiorentino. Gallery of Francis I: The Gallery of Francis I, connecting the king's apartments with the chapel, decorated between 1533 and 1539. It introduced the Italian Renaissance style to France.

Each of Francis's projects was luxuriously decorated, both inside and out. Fontainebleau, for instance, had a gushing fountain in its courtyard where quantities of wine were mixed with the water. The fountain was linked to a legend related to one of the best known projects for the château.

Among the most striking works of art within Fontainebleau was the *Nymphe de Fontainebleau* (1542) by the Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini. Francis commissioned this large-scale bronze bas relief , cast in the lost wax process, as the tympanum to sit atop the *Porte Dorée*. In the sculpture, a Mannerist nude nymph reclines among woodland animals, such as deer and boars. The central buck, wearing a garland of fruit, symbolizes Francis's power. As a whole the sculpture is based on a legend in which a hunting dog discovered a spring personified by a nymph learning against an urn . It was this spring that gave the château and surrounding environs the name Fontainebleau. The tympanum was to be flanked on either side by bronze sculptures of nude satyrs , posed as mirror images of one another, also cast by Cellini. Eventually, the project was abandoned, and the nymph was integrated into the design of an aristocrat's palace 10 years later.

Benvenuto Cellini, Nymphe de Fontainebleau: Bronze. 1542. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Spanish Architecture in the Northern Renaissance

Gothic, Renaissance, and Mannerist elements are all important to the architecture of Spain in the 16th century.

Learning Objectives

Examine the influence of Gothic, Renaissance, and Mannerist elements in the architecture of Spain in the 16th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Plateresque emerged in Spain in the late 15th century. This architectural style , named for silversmiths, was known for producing decorative façades suggestive of silver plate.
- From the mid 16th century, Spanish architecture adhered closely to the art of ancient Rome , anticipating Mannerism .
- The Herrerian style dominated Spain in the late 16th and 17th centuries and was defined by clean and sober façades and attention to geometrical precision.
- El Escorial is a well-known example of the Herrerian style with its austere façades and fortress-like appearance.

Key Terms

- **Herrerian**: A 16th century Spanish style characterized by geometric rigor, clean volumes, the dominance of the wall over the span, and the almost total absence of decoration.
- **plateresque**: Pertaining to an ornate style of architecture of 16th century Spain suggestive of silver plate.

Renaissance architecture reached the Iberian peninsula in the 16th century, ushering in a new style that gradually replaced the Gothic architecture , which had been popular for the centuries.

Gothic forms began to incorporate the classical style of the Renaissance in the last decades of the 15th century. Local architects developed a specifically Spanish Renaissance, bringing the influence of South Italian architecture, sometimes from illuminated books and paintings, mixed with Gothic tradition and local traditions. The new style was called Plateresque because of the extremely decorated façades that brought to the mind the decorative motifs of the intricately detailed work of silversmiths, the "Plateros." Ornamentation included floral designs, chandeliers, festoons, fantastic creatures, and similar configurations. The spatial arrangement of Plateresque, however, is more clearly Gothic-inspired. This fixation on specific parts and their spacing, without structural changes of the Gothic pattern, causes it to be often classified as simply a variation of Renaissance style. A prime example of this decorative style can be seen in the façade of the University of Salamanca.

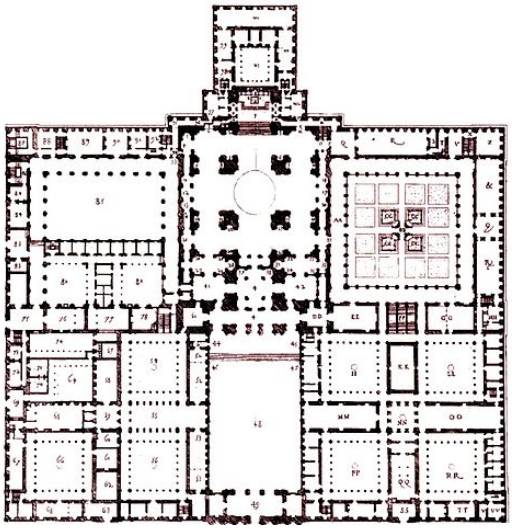
University of Salamanca façade: The ornate façade of the University of Salamanca is a prime example of the Plateresque style.

From the mid 16th century, under architects such as Pedro Machuca, Juan Bautista de Toledo, and Juan de Herrera, there was a much closer adherence to the art of ancient Rome, sometimes anticipating Mannerism. An example of this is the palace of Charles V in Granada built by Pedro Machuca.

A new style emerged in Spain with the work of Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera in El Escorial, known as the Herrerian style. Herrerian architecture was extremely sober, naked, and particularly accomplished in the use of granite ashlar work. This style influenced the Spanish architecture of both the peninsula and the colonies for over a century.

Monasterio de Uclés, Cuenca, España: The Monastery of Uclés is a prime example of Herrerian architecture.

The floor plan of El Escorial—a palace for the royal family, monastery for their clergy, and burial place for major Spanish monarchs—was designed in the form of a gridiron. It was a design whose origin remains a matter of debate.



El Escorial, plan: The gridiron design of the floor plan of El Escorial has a modular plan, as seen in medieval cathedrals, and geometric symmetry, as seen in classical architecture.

Regardless of the reasons behind the floor plan, its basic components, as well as the general exterior and main façade, conform to the austerity of the Herrerian style, making the structure appear more like a fortress than a palace or monastery. It takes the form of a gigantic quadrangle, which encloses a series of intersecting passageways and courtyards and chambers. At each of the four corners is a square tower surmounted by a spire and near the center of the complex rise the pointed belfries and round dome of the basilica , which are and taller than the rest. As overseer of the construction of El Escorial, Philip II instructed his architects to maintain a sense of simplicity.

Aerial view of El Escorial: The compound of El Escorial contains features that conform to the austerity of Renaissance architecture throughout Europe while also anticipating the Baroque era.

The austerity of the west façade of El Escorial is typical of the classicism that re-emerged during the Renaissance. However, the main entrance, which takes the form of classical temple façades stacked atop another, actually looks forward to an architectural design that would become common during the Baroque era throughout Europe.

Monastery of St. Lawrence, El Escorial, main façade: The double temple façade contains engaged, as opposed to free-standing, columns in the Doric and Ionic orders.

English Architecture in the Northern Renaissance

The Tudor architectural style was the final development of medieval architecture during the Tudor period (1485–1603).

Learning Objectives

Describe the key elements of the Tudor architectural style, including the Tudor arch, oriel windows, and the chimney stack

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Tudor architecture followed the Perpendicular style and, although superseded by Elizabethan architecture in the domestic building of any pretensions to fashion, the Tudor style still retained its hold on English taste.
- The four-centered arch , now known as the Tudor arch , was a defining feature of the period. It was often used in the construction of large lancet style windows.
- Another common feature of Tudor architecture was the oriel window and the jetty , both defined by their projection from the main part of the building.
- During this period, the arrival of the chimney stack and enclosed hearths resulted in the decline of the great hall based around an open hearth, which was typical of earlier medieval architecture.
- During the Tudor era, houses and buildings of ordinary people were typically timber -framed, the frame usually filled with wattle and daub but occasionally with brick.

Key Terms

- **Perpendicular style**: The third historical division of English Gothic architecture, so called because of its emphasis on vertical lines.
- **Tudor arch**: Low and wide with a pointed apex, much wider than its height and appearing to have been flattened under pressure.
- **jetty**: A building technique used in medieval timber-frame buildings in which an upper floor projects beyond the dimensions of the floor below.
- **oriel**: A form of bay window that projects from the main wall of a building but does not reach to the ground.
- **Elizabethan**: Pertaining to the reign of first female monarch of England.

The Tudor architectural style was the final development of medieval architecture during the Tudor period (1485–1603), and even beyond, for conservative college patrons . The designation “Tudor style” is an awkward one, with its implied suggestions of continuity through the period of the Tudor dynasty and the misleading impression that there was a style break at the accession of

Stuart James I in 1603. It followed the Perpendicular style and, although superseded by Elizabethan architecture in the domestic building of any pretensions to fashion, the Tudor style still retained its hold on English taste. Portions of the additions to the various colleges of Oxford University and Cambridge University were still being carried out in the Tudor style, which overlaps with the first stirrings of the Gothic Revival.

The Tudor arch, a low and wide type of arch with a pointed apex , was a defining feature of the period. It is much wider than its height and gives the visual effect of having been flattened under pressure. This type of arch, when employed as a window opening, lends itself to very wide spaces , as seen in the chapel window of King's College at Cambridge University.

King's College chapel, University of Cambridge: The chapel at King's College of the University of Cambridge is one of the finest examples of late Gothic (Perpendicular) English architecture, while its early Renaissance rood screen (separating the nave and chancel), erected in 1532–36 in a striking contrast of style, shows the influence of architecture from the Italian peninsula.

Some of the most remarkable oriel windows belong to this period. An example can be seen in the Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great in London. The oriel window was installed inside St. Bartholomew the Great in the early 16th century by Prior William Bolton, allegedly so that he could keep an eye on the monks. The symbol in the center panel is a crossbow "bolt" passing through a "tun" (or barrel), a pun on the name of the prior.

Oriel window, Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great: Early 16th century London.

During this period, the arrival of the chimney stack and enclosed hearths resulted in the decline of the great hall based around an open hearth, which was typical of earlier medieval architecture. Instead, fireplaces could now be placed upstairs, and it became possible to have a second story that ran the whole length of the house. Tudor chimney pieces were made large and elaborate to draw attention to the owner's adoption of this new technology. The jetty appeared as a way to show off the modernity of having a complete, full-length upper floor.

Little Moreton Hall: Little Moreton Hall, constructed in the mid 16th century, is an example of a Tudor style timber-frame house with a chimney stack and a jettied second floor visible from the exterior.

The style of large houses moved away from the defensive architecture of earlier moated manor houses, and instead began emphasizing aesthetics . For example, quadrangular ('H' or 'E' shaped plans) became more common. It was also fashionable for these larger buildings to incorporate "devices," or riddles, designed into the building, which served to demonstrate the owner's wit and to delight visitors. Occasionally these were Catholic symbols, for example, subtle or not-so-subtle references to the trinity, seen in three-sided, triangular, or 'Y' shaped plans, designs, or motifs .

The houses and buildings of ordinary people were typically timber-framed, the frame usually filled with wattle and daub but occasionally with brick. These houses were also slower to adopt the latest trends and the great hall continued to prevail. The Dissolution of the Monasteries provided surplus land, resulting in a small building boom, as well as a source of stone.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage is a 12-room farmhouse where the wife of William Shakespeare lived as a child in the village of Shottery, Warwickshire, England. As in many houses of the period, it has multiple chimneys to spread the heat evenly throughout the house during winter. The largest chimney was used for cooking. It also has visible timber framing, typical of vernacular Tudor architecture.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage: The design of the childhood home of Anne Hathaway is typical of a house inhabited by commoners in Tudor England.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Dijon-Palais-Gisant-Detail. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dijon-Palais-Gisant-Detail.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Dijon_mosesbrunnen2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=763389. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dijon - Tombeau des ducs de Bourgogne 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dijon_-_Tombeau_des_ducs_de_Bourgogne_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Dijon_-_Chartreuse_de_Champmol_-_Portail_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2758448%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Champmol.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5505613. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Well of Moses. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Well_of_Moses. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Champmol. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Champmol. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Carthusian Monastery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthusian%20monastery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Philip the Bold. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip%20the%20Bold. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Valois. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Valois. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- France Loir-et-Cher Blois Chateau 05. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:France_Loir-et-Cher_Blois_Chateau_05.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Chateau_de_Fontainebleau_Cour_ovale.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11713096. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Francis1-1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Francis1-1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Escalier_double_helice_Chambord.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=445927. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Chu00e2teau_de_Fontainebleau_2011_(262).jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16668144%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Nymphe_de_Fontainebleau.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23381123. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Chambord_Castle_Northwest_facade.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22654063. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 619px-ChambordGrundriss.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2178228. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chu00e2teau de Blois. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Blois. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nymphe de Fontainebleau. **Provided by**: Wikipedia (France). **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymphe_de_Fontainebleau. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chu00e2teau de Chambord. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Chambord. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palace of Fontainebleau. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Fontainebleau#The_Renaissance_Ch.C3.A2teau_of_Francis_I_.281528.E2.80.931547.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Francis I of France. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_I_of_France. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Patron. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/patron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Francis I. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis%20I. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chateau. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chateau. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Facade_monastery_San_Lorenzo_de_El_Escorial_Spain.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21879649. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 334px-University_of_Salamanca.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39607. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Herrerian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Herrerian. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Vista_aerea_del_Monasterio_de_El_Escorial.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6581920%20. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 471px-Escorial_traza_def.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2945873. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- El Escorial. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Escorial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of the Spanish Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_the_Spanish_Renaissance. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Plateresque. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/plateresque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Herrerian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Herrerian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- KingsCollegeChapel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KingsCollegeChapel.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-LittleMoretonHall.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=942415. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Prior_Bolton_Oriel_Window.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7066809. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 620px-Anne_Hathaways_Cottage_1_(5662418953).jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21108259. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- English Gothic Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Gothic_architecture#Perpendicular_Gothic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oriel Window. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriel_window. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- St. Bartholomew the Great. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Bartholomew-the-Great. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Anne Hathaway's Cottage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Hathaway%27s_Cottage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Perpendicular Style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Perpendicular%20style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tudor Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudor_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elizabethan. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Elizabethan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tudor Arch. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudor%20arch. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 20.4: Architecture of the Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

20.5: Sculpture of the Northern Renaissance

Wood Sculpture in the Northern Renaissance

The sculpture of Veit Stoss and Tilman Riemenschneider show the evolution from the Gothic style to the styles of the Renaissance.

Learning Objectives

Describe how the sculptures of Veit Stoss and Tilman Riemenschneider mark a transition between the Gothic and Renaissance styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Veit Stoss and Tilman Riemenschneider are the most famous among the wood carvers of the German-speaking states of the Northern Renaissance . Their long careers covered the transition between the Gothic and Renaissance periods, although their ornament often remained Gothic even after their compositions began to reflect Renaissance principles.
- Veit Stoss was a leading German sculptor, mostly in wood, whose style emphasized pathos and emotion, helped by his virtuoso carving of billowing drapery.
- Tilman Riemenschneider, also known for his wood sculptures, produced work in the Gothic, classical , and Mannerist styles. His tomb of Lorenz von Bibra marks a transition between the Gothic and the classical.

Key Terms

- **polychromatic**: Multi-colored.
- **virtuoso**: A person (especially a musician) with masterly ability, technique, or personal style.

The late 15th and early 16th centuries mark the transition in wood sculpture from the International Gothic to a more classical style of the Renaissance. Often seen as a revival of the classical style, the International Gothic is defined by a dignified elegance, which replaces monumentality, along with rich decorative coloring, elongated figures, and flowing lines . It also makes a more practiced use of perspective , modeling, and setting.

Through commerce and individual travel, the classical and Mannerist styles from the Italian peninsula began to make their way north. The classical style recaptures the naturalism of Graeco-Roman art, with attention to features of the body and expressive restraint. Artists working in this style often employed live models to ensure a realistic appearance of their productions. On the other hand, the Mannerist, or Late Renaissance, style jettisoned the live model and aimed for more expressive figures, resulting in heightened emotion and drama and sometime artificially elongated and ill-proportioned bodies. The wood sculptures of the German-speaking states of this time display both Italian styles in addition to more traditional International Gothic elements.

Veit Stoss (1450–1533), Tilman Riemenschneider (1460–1531), and Peter Vischer the Elder (1455–1529) are the most famous among the wood carvers of the German-speaking states of the Northern Renaissance. Their long careers covered the transition between the Gothic and Renaissance periods, although their ornamentation often remained Gothic even after their compositions began to reflect Renaissance principles.

Veit Stoss

Veit Stoss was a leading German sculptor, mostly working in wood, whose career covered the transition between the late Gothic and the Northern Renaissance. His style emphasizes pathos, often conveyed by tilted heads, downcast eyes, expressive or introspective countenances, and dynamic poses. His virtuoso carving of billowing drapery helps to underscore this sense of emotion. He had a large workshop, and in addition to his own works there are a number by pupils. He is best known for the colossal polychromatic altarpiece in St. Mary’s Basilica in Kraków, Poland, produced in collaboration with his son Stanislaw. Completed in 1489, the altarpiece was the largest triptych of its time. Its use of drama through gilding, diagonal lines, and expressive body language convey Stoss’s loyalty to the International Gothic style, while its naturalistic bodies and drapery point to an adoption of Renaissance attributes.

Gothic Altar by Veit Stoss: The altar at in Kraków was not completed until 1489, and was the largest triptych of its time. Like his other large works, it required a large workshop including specialized painters and gilders.

Better known for his polychromatic sculptures, Stoss also left some sculptures unpainted, as became the preferred appearance for a brief time in the early 16th century. This can be seen in *Tobias and the Angel* (c. 1504–06), a commission for Bamberg Cathedral . Like his painted sculptures, *Tobias and the Angel* retains Stoss's signature expressive countenances and body language.

Tobias and the Angel by Veit Stoss: Limewood. 1504–06. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

Tilman Riemenschneider

Tilman Riemenschneider was active in Würzburg from 1483. He was one of the most prolific and versatile sculptors of the transition period between late Gothic and Renaissance, a master in stone and limewood. His work is characterized by the expressiveness of the figurines ' faces (often shown with an inward look) and by their detailed and richly folded clothing. The emphasis on expression of inner emotions sets Riemenschneider's work apart from that of his immediate predecessors.

Riemenschneider's early success as a sculptor was due to the plasticity of his works, with great care in the modeling of garments. This way of sculpting the garments as well as the typical oval faces and almond-shaped eyes were modeled on art from the Upper Rhine region of the 1470s, implying that Riemenschneider might have learned his trade either there or at Ulm. Later works lost some of the volume of the early sculptures, allowing a more efficient production. While his earlier styles convey a strong Gothic influence, his mature style shows Mannerist characteristics.

Reimenschneider's tomb of Lorenz von Bibra, the Prince-Bishop of Würzburg, is considered a transition work from the Gothic to the Renaissance style. Here, the figure of the interred is depicted with veristic "warts-and-all" realism , shown in his gaunt cheeks and double chin. Such attributes are reminiscent of the Roman Republic. While the top half of his body is masked in his heavy

drapery (a hallmark of many medieval styles), the lower half depicts the contours of his legs, acknowledging the body beneath the garments (a hallmark of classicism). Likewise, his hands, drapery folds, sword, and scepter are rendered in a realistic manner.

Tomb of Lorenz von Bibra by Tilman Riemenschneider: Limewood. 1520–22. Würzburg Cathedral. Würzburg, Germany.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 167px-LorenzvBibrawholegrave.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3073618. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Gothic altar veit stoss bordercropped. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gothic_altar_veit_stoss_bordercropped.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 423px-GNM-Veit-Stoss-Raphael-Tobias.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15140669%20. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Veit Stoss altarpiece in Kraku00f3w. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Veit_Stoss_altarpiece_in_Krak%C3%B3w. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Northern Renaissance. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Renaissance#Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tilman Riemenschneider. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilman_Riemenschneider. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lorenz von Bibra. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenz_von_Bibra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- International Gothic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Gothic#Painting_and_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- German Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/German_art#Sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Veit Stoss. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Veit_Stoss. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Virtuoso. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/virtuoso. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 20.5: Sculpture of the Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

20.6: Textiles of the Northern Renaissance

Flemish Textiles of the Northern Renaissance

During the Burgundy period, Flanders became one of the richest parts of Europe, where magnificent tapestries where produced.

Learning Objectives

Examine the importance of tapestries in Flanders during the Burgundy period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- By 1433, most of the Belgian and Luxembourgian territory, along with much of the rest of the Low Countries, became part of Burgundy under Philip the Good . When Mary of Burgundy, granddaughter of Philip the Good, married Maximilian I, the Low Countries became Habsburg territory.
- Flemish tapestries hung on the walls of castles throughout Europe. Some designs were influenced by the paintings of major Italian Renaissance artists such as Raphael, which were copied into textile form by Flemish artists who trained on the Italian peninsula.
- Millefleurs was a particularly popular style during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. This style features backgrounds filled with small, yet detailed, bouquets of flowers. The name literally translates from French as “a thousand flowers.”
- Among the most famous of Flemish tapestries is *The Hunt of the Unicorn* , often referred to as the *Unicorn Tapestries*: a series of seven tapestries dating from 1495–1505.
- The two major interpretations of many Flemish tapestries from the Renaissance hinge on both pagan and Christian symbolism .

Key Terms

- **cartoon**: A preparatory two-dimensional drawing of a finished artwork.
- **slashing**: A decorative technique that involved making small cuts on the outer fabric of a garment in order to reveal the inner garment or lining.
- **Flanders**: A subnational state in the north of federal Belgium, the institutional merger of a territorial region and the Dutch language “community” that also has/shares some authority in the capital region Brussels.
- **unicorn**: A mythical beast traditionally represented as having the legs of a buck, the body of a horse, the tail of a lion, and a single spiral horn on its head; a symbol of virginity.
- **tapestries**: A form of textile art, traditionally woven on a vertical loom, however it can also be woven on a floor loom as well. It is composed of two sets of interlaced threads, those running parallel to the length (called the warp) and those parallel to the width (called the weft); the warp threads are set up under tension on a loom, and the weft thread is passed back and forth across part or all of the warps.

The Evolution of Art and Industry

By 1433 most of the Belgian and Luxembourgian territory, along with much of the rest of the Low Countries, became part of Burgundy under Philip the Good. When Mary of Burgundy, granddaughter of Philip the Good, married Maximilian I, the Low Countries became Hapsburg territory. Their son, Philip I of Castile (Philip the Handsome), was the father of the later Charles V. The Holy Roman Empire was unified with Spain under the Hapsburg Dynasty after Charles V inherited several domains.

During the late Middle Ages—especially during the Burgundy period (the 15th and 16th centuries)— Flanders ‘s trading towns, particularly Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, made it one of the richest and most urbanized parts of Europe, weaving the wool of neighboring lands into cloth for both domestic use and export. As a result, a very sophisticated culture developed, with impressive achievements in the arts and architecture, rivaling those of Northern Italy. Trade in the port of Bruges and the textile industry, mostly in Ghent, turned Flanders into the wealthiest part of Northern Europe at the end of the 15th century.

The Influence of Raphael in Brussels

The great period of Renaissance weaving in Brussels dates from the weaving entrusted by Pope Leo X (1475–1521) to a consortium of its studios of *The Acts of the Apostles* after cartoons by Raphael, between 1515 and 1519. The conventions of a monumental pictorial representation with the effects of perspective that would be expected of a fresco or other wall decoration were applied for the first time in these tapestries.

The prominent painter and tapestry designer Bernard van Orley (who trained in Italy) transmuted the Raphaelesque monumental figures to forge a new tapestry style that combined the Italian figural style and perspective rendition with the rich narrative and ornamental traditions of the Netherlands. Such elements can be found in his nine-part series called *The Honors*, of which the tapestry *Fortuna* is a notable example.

Fortuna by Bernard van Orley. (c. 1520): From a nine-part set called The Honors, woven in the workshop of Pieter van Aelst, Brussels.

Millefleurs

Literally translating as “a thousand flowers,” the Millefleurs style refers to a background style of many different small flowers and plants, usually shown on a green ground , as though growing in grass. This style was most popular in late 15th- and early 16th century French and Flemish tapestry, with the best known examples in the series *The Hunt of the Unicorn* (see below). These are from what has been called the “classic” period, where each “bouquet” or plant is individually designed, improvised by the weavers as they worked, while later tapestries, probably mostly made in Brussels, usually have mirror images of plants on the right and left sides of the piece, suggesting a cartoon reused twice. Another classic example is *The Triumph of Death* (1510–20), in which the Fates represent death as they stand above the body of a fallen maiden. The background consists of rich vegetation expected in the millefleurs tradition.

The Triumph of Death (1510–20): The three Fates (Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos), who spin, draw out, and cut the Thread of Life, represent Death, as they triumph over the fallen body of Chastity. This is the third subject in Petrarch's poem "The Triumphs." First, Love triumphs, then Love is overcome by Chastity, Chastity by Death, Death by Fame, Fame by Time, and Time by Eternity.

The Hunt of the Unicorn

Flemish tapestries hung on the walls of castles throughout Europe. Among the most famous of Flemish tapestries is *The Hunt of the Unicorn*, often referred to as the *Unicorn Tapestries*. These constitute a series of seven tapestries dating from 1495–1505. The tapestries show a group of noblemen and hunters in pursuit of a unicorn. The tapestries were woven in wool, metallic threads, and silk. The vibrant colors still evident today were produced with three dye plants: weld (yellow), madder (red), and woad (blue). One tapestry, *The Mystic Capture of the Unicorn*, survives only in two fragments.

The second of the Unicorn Tapestries: The second of the seven tapestries, often called *The Unicorn is Found*.

Interpretive Traditions: Pagan and Christian

Much of the history of the *Unicorn Tapestries* is disputed, and there are many theories about their original purpose and meaning, including suggestions that the seven tapestries were not originally hung together. However, it seems likely that they were

commissioned by Anne of Brittany to celebrate her marriage to the King of France Louis XII.

The two major interpretations of the tapestries hinge on pagan and Christian symbolism respectively. The pagan interpretation focuses on the medieval lore of beguiled lovers, whereas Christian writings interpret the unicorn and its death as the Passion of Christ. The unicorn has long been identified as a symbol of Christ by Christian writers, allowing the traditionally pagan symbolism of the unicorn to become acceptable within religious doctrine. The original myths surrounding *The Hunt of the Unicorn* refer to a beast with one horn that can only be tamed by a virgin. Subsequently, Christian scholars translated this into an allegory for Christ's relationship with the Virgin Mary.

Ancient Graeco-Roman paganism lies in the interpretation of *The Triumph of Death*, with the Fates hailing from pre-Christian times. However, the tapestry may also align with the vanitas tradition, which began to emerge in the art of the Northern Renaissance and would become enormously popular with the elite classes of the Netherlands during the Baroque period. Vanitas images, whether as still-lifes or as women adoring their reflections, usually couple earthly (transient) concerns with a symbol or specter of death. No matter how concerned a woman might be with her beauty, death always lurks in the background and can strike at any moment, causing the viewer to focus on the preparedness of his or her soul for the afterlife.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- The Hunt of the Unicorn Tapestry 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Hunt_of_the_Unicorn_Tapestry_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 398px-Fates_tapestry.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2628868. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Honors_Tapestry_Fortuna.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18495274. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Brussels Tapestry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Brussels_tapestry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Renaissance in the Low Countries. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_in_the_Low_Countries. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Millefleur. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Millefleur. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Unicorn. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/unicorn. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Devonshire Hunting Tapestries. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Devonshire_Hunting_Tapestries. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Flanders. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Flanders. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Belgium. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Belgium. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Hunt of the Unicorn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunt_of_the_Unicorn. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tapestries. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/tapestries. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 20.6: Textiles of the Northern Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

21: The Baroque Period

21.1: The Baroque Period

21.2: Architecture of the Baroque Period

21.3: Sculpture of the Baroque Period

21.4: Painting of the Baroque Period

21.5: The Dutch Painters

This page titled 21: The Baroque Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

21.1: The Baroque Period

Defining the Baroque Period

Baroque is a period of artistic style that started around 1600 in Rome, Italy, and spread throughout the majority of Europe.

Learning Objectives

Name the most prominent characteristics of Baroque art and its best known artists

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The most important factors during the Baroque era were the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation ; the development of the Baroque style was considered to be closely linked with the Catholic Church. The popularity of the Baroque style was encouraged by the Catholic Church, which had decided at the Council of Trent that the arts should communicate religious themes and direct emotional involvement in response to the Protestant Reformation .
- The Baroque style is characterized by exaggerated motion and clear detail used to produce drama, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture , painting, architecture, literature, dance, and music.
- The chiaroscuro technique refers to the interplay between light and dark that was often used in Baroque paintings of dimly lit scenes to produce a very high-contrast, dramatic atmosphere.
- Famous painters of the Baroque era include Rubens, Caravaggio, and Rembrandt. In music, the Baroque style makes up a large part of the classical canon, such as Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi.
- The later Baroque style was termed *Rococo*, a style characterized by increasingly decorative and elaborate works.

Key Terms

- **Counter-Reformation**: The period of Catholic revival beginning with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and ending at the close of the Thirty Years' War (1648); sometimes considered a response to the Protestant Reformation.
- **Reformation**: The religious movement initiated by Martin Luther in the 16th century to reform the Roman Catholic Church.
- **Council of Trent**: One of the Roman Catholic Church's most important ecumenical meetings, held between 1545 and 1563 in northern Italy; it was prompted by the Protestant Reformation and has been described as the embodiment of the Counter-Reformation.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

Overview: The Baroque Period

The Baroque is a period of artistic style that started around 1600 in Rome , Italy, and spread throughout the majority of Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. In informal usage, the word *baroque* describes something that is elaborate and highly detailed.

The most important factors during the Baroque era were the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, with the development of the Baroque style considered to be linked closely with the Catholic Church. The popularity of the style was in fact encouraged by the Catholic Church, which had decided at the Council of Trent that the arts should communicate religious themes and direct emotional involvement in response to the Protestant Reformation. Baroque art manifested itself differently in various European countries owing to their unique political and cultural climates.

Characteristics

The Baroque style is characterized by exaggerated motion and clear detail used to produce drama, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance, and music. Baroque iconography was direct, obvious, and dramatic, intending to appeal above all to the senses and the emotions.

The use of the chiaroscuro technique is a well known trait of Baroque art. This technique refers to the interplay between light and dark and is often used in paintings of dimly lit scenes to produce a very high-contrast, dramatic atmosphere. The chiaroscuro technique is visible in the painting *The Massacre of the Innocents* by Peter Paul Rubens. Other important Baroque painters include Caravaggio (who is thought to be a precursor to the movement and is known for work characterized by close-up action and strong diagonals) and Rembrandt.

The Massacre of the Innocents by Peter Paul Rubens: *Chiaroscuro* refers to the interplay between light and dark and is a technique often used in paintings of dimly lit scenes to produce a very high-contrast, dramatic atmosphere. This technique is visible in this painting by Peter Paul Rubens.

In the Baroque style of architecture, emphasis was placed on bold spaces , domes , and large masses , as exemplified by the Queluz National Palace in Portugal. In music, the Baroque style makes up a large part of the classical canon. Important composers include Johann Sebastian Bach, George Handel, and Antonio Vivaldi. In the later part of the period, the Baroque style was termed *Rococo*, a style characterized by increasingly decorative and elaborate works.

Queluz National Palace, Portugal: In the Baroque style of architecture, emphasis was placed on bold spaces, domes, and large masses, as exemplified by the Queluz National Palace in Portugal.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Peter Paul Rubens Massacre of the Innocents. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens_Massacre_of_the_Innocents.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Queluz Palace fountains. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Queluz_Palace_fountains.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Counter-Reformation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baroque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baroque. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Council of Trent. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Trent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caravaggio. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravaggio. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Reformation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 21.1: The Baroque Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

21.2: Architecture of the Baroque Period

Italian Architecture in the Baroque Period

The highly theatrical Baroque architectural style dominated Italy in the 1600s.

Learning Objectives

Define the characteristics and examples of Roman Baroque architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Baroque architecture was linked to the Counter- Reformation , celebrating the wealth of the Catholic church. It was characterized by new explorations of form , light and shadow, and dramatic intensity .
- Bernini was the master of Baroque architecture in Rome ; St. Peter's Square was one of his greatest achievements.
- Carlo Fontana became Rome's leading Baroque architect following Bernini's death in 1680.
- Other influential Baroque architects in Italy included Carol Maderno, Pietro la Cortano, and Francesco Borromini.

Key Terms

- **Counter-Reformation**: The period of Catholic revival beginning with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and ending at the close of the Thirty Years' War (1648); sometimes considered a response to the Protestant Reformation.
- **Baroque**: A period in western art from c. 1600 to the middle of the 18th century, characterized by drama, rich color, and dramatic contrast between light and shadow.

The Baroque Period in Italy

The Baroque period of architecture began in the late 16th century in Rome, Italy. It took the Roman vocabulary of Renaissance architecture and used it in a new rhetorical and theatrical fashion, often to express the triumph of the Catholic Church and the absolutist state. It was characterized by new explorations of form, light and shadow, and dramatic intensity.

Whereas the Renaissance drew on the wealth and power of the Italian courts and was a blend of secular and religious forces, the Baroque was, initially at least, directly linked to the Counter-Reformation, a movement within the Catholic Church to reform itself in response to the Protestant Reformation . Baroque architecture and its embellishments were on one hand more accessible to the emotions and on the other hand, a visible statement of the wealth and power of the Catholic Church.

Architectural Accomplishments

A number of ecclesiastical buildings of the Baroque period in Rome had plans based on the Italian paradigm of the basilica with a crossed dome and nave , but the treatment of the architecture was very different than what had been carried out previously. One of the first Roman structures to break with the previous conventions of the Mannerist style was the church of Santa Susanna, designed by Carlo Maderno. The dynamic rhythm of columns and pilasters , central massing, and the protrusion and condensed central decoration add complexity to the structure. There is an incipient playfulness with the rules of classic design, but it still maintains a level of rigor.

Facade of Santa Susanna by Carlo Maderno: The design elements of this church signaled a departure from the prevailing Mannerist style of architecture at the time.

Pietro de Cortona

The same concerns with plasticity, massing, dramatic effects, and shadow and light are evident in the architectural work of Pietro da Cortona, illustrated by his design of Santi Luca e Martina (of which construction began in 1635) with what was probably the first curved Baroque church façade in Rome. These concerns are even more evident in his reworking of Santa Maria della Pace (1656–8). The façade of the building, with its chiaroscuro half-domed portico and concave side wings, closely resembles a theatrical stage set and projects forward so that it substantially fills the tiny trapezoidal piazza .

Santa Maria Della Pace: Pietro da Cortona restored the edifice of Santa Maria Della Pace, adding a Baroque façade.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini

Other Roman ensembles of the Baroque and late Baroque period are likewise suffused with theatricality and, as urban theatres, provide points of focus within the surrounding cityscape. Probably the most well-known example of such an approach is Saint Peter's Square, which has been praised as a masterstroke of Baroque theatre. The piazza, designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, is formed principally by two colonnades of free-standing columns centered on an Egyptian obelisk . Bernini's own favorite design was his oval church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, decorated with polychome marbles and an ornate gold dome. His secular architecture included the Palazzo Barberini (based on plans by Maderno) and the Palazzo Chigi-Odescalchi (1664), both in Rome.

St. Peter's Square by Gian Lorenzo Bernini: St. Peter's Square is an iconic example of Baroque theatricality.

Francesco Borromini

Bernini's rival, the architect Francesco Borromini, produced designs that deviated dramatically from the regular compositions of the ancient world and Renaissance. His building plans were based on complex geometric figures, his architectural forms were unusual and inventive, and he employed multi-layered symbolism in his architectural designs. His iconic masterpiece is the diminutive church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, distinguished by a complicated plan arrangement that is partly oval and partly a cross, giving it complex convex-concave wall rhythms.

Carlo Fontana

Following the death of Bernini in 1680, Carlo Fontana emerged as the most influential architect working in Rome during the Baroque period. His early style is exemplified by the slightly concave façade of San Marcello al Corso. Fontana's academic approach, though lacking the dazzling inventiveness of his Roman predecessors, exerted substantial influence on Baroque architecture both through his prolific writings and through the number of architects he trained, who would disseminate the Baroque idioms throughout 18th-century Europe.

Spanish Architecture in the Baroque Period

A particular strand of Baroque architecture evolved in Spain and its provinces and former colonies in the late 17th century.

Learning Objectives

Identify characteristics of Spanish Baroque architecture, its most famous examples, and how it differs from the art of Northern Europe in the 17th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In contrast to the art of Northern Europe, the Spanish art of the Baroque period appealed to the emotions rather than seeking to please the intellect.
- The Churriguera family, which specialized in designing altars and retables, revolted against the sobriety of the previous Herrerian classicism and promoted an intricate, exaggerated, almost capricious style of surface decoration known as the Churrigueresque.
- Between 1720 and 1760, the Churrigueresque column , or estipite, in the shape of an inverted cone or obelisk was established as a central element of ornamental decoration.
- Some of the most notable examples of Spanish architecture from the Baroque period include the façades of the University of Valladolid (1719) and the western façade of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela (1750).

Key Terms

- **Herrerian**: A style of architecture developed in Spain during the last third of the 16th century under the reign of Philip II (1556–1598) and continued in force in the 17th century, transformed then by the Baroque current of the time.
- **Moorish**: Of or pertaining to a style of Spanish architecture from the time of the Moors, characterized by the horseshoe arch and ornate, geometric decoration.
- **Baroque**: A period in western art from c. 1600 to the middle of the 18th century, characterized by drama, rich color, and dramatic contrast between light and shadow.
- **Obelisk**: A tall, square, tapered stone monolith topped with a pyramidal point, frequently used as a monument.

The Development of Baroque in Spain

Spanish Baroque is a strand of Baroque architecture that evolved in Spain and its provinces and former colonies, notably Spanish America and Belgium, in the late 17th century. As Italian Baroque influences spread across the Pyrenees Mountains, they gradually superseded in popularity the restrained classical approach of Juan de Herrera, which had been in vogue since the late 16th century.

For example, by 1667, the facades of Granada Cathedral (by Alonso Cano) and Jaén Cathedral (by Eufrasio López de Rojas) suggest the artists' fluency in interpreting traditional motifs of Spanish cathedral architecture in the Baroque aesthetic idiom . In Madrid, a vernacular Baroque with its roots in Herrerian and in traditional brick construction was developed in the Plaza Mayor and in the Royal Palace of El Buen Retiro, which was destroyed during the French invasion by Napoleon's troops. Its gardens still remain as El Retiro park. This sober brick Baroque of the 17th century is still well represented in the streets of the capital in palaces and squares.

Plaza Mayor: Three sides of the Plaza Mayor, well known for its Spanish Baroque architecture.

Comparisons to Northern Europe

In contrast to the art of Northern Europe, the Spanish art of the period appealed to the emotions rather than seeking to please the intellect. The Churriguera family, which specialized in designing altars and retables, revolted against the sobriety of the Herrerian classicism and promoted an intricate, exaggerated, almost capricious style of surface decoration known as the Churrigueresque. Within half a century, they transformed Salamanca into an exemplary Churrigueresque city. Between 1680 and 1720, the Churriguera popularized Guarini's blend of Solomonic columns and composite order, known as the "supreme order. " Between

1720 and 1760, the Churrigueresque column, or estipite, in the shape of an inverted cone or obelisk was established as a central element of ornamental decoration.

Caravaca de la Cruz.: The Churrigueresque column, or estipite, was a central element of ornamental decoration in the Spanish Baroque, as shown here in the Estipite in the Church of Caravaca de la Cruz.

Notable Examples

Examples of the most eye-catching creations of Spanish Baroque are the energetic façades of the University of Valladolid (Diego Tome and Fray Pedro de la Visitación, 1719) and the western façade (or Fachada del Obradoiro) of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela (Fernando de Casas y Novoa, 1750). In these examples, as in many others, the Churrigueresque design involves a play of tectonic and decorative elements with little relation to structure and function. The focus of the florid ornamentation is an elaborately sculptured surround to a main doorway. If one removed the intricate maze of broken pediments , undulating cornices , stucco shells, inverted tapers, and garlands from the rather plain wall it is set against, the building's form would not be affected in the slightest.

Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain.: The facade of the Santiago de Compostela reflects the Churrigueresque facade; the lavish details of the facade have little structural use.

At the same time, Churrigueresque baroque offered some of the most impressive combinations of space and light. Buildings like Granada Charterhouse (by Francisco Hurtado Izquierdo), considered to be the highest example of Churrigueresque styles applied to interior spaces, or the Transparente of the Cathedral of Toledo (by Narciso Tomé) integrate sculpture and architecture to achieve notable light and dramatic effects.

The Royal Palace of Madrid and the interventions of Paseo del Prado (Salón del Prado and Alcalá Doorgate, also in the same city), deserve special mention. They were constructed in a sober Baroque international style, often mistaken for neoclassical, by the kings Philip V and Charles III. The Royal Palaces of La Granja de San Ildefonso in Segovia and Aranjuez in Madrid are good examples of Baroque integration of architecture and gardening. They have a noticeable French influence (La Granja was known as the Spanish Versailles) but contain local spatial conceptions that in some ways display the heritage of the Moorish occupation.

In Flanders , which was the richest imperial province of 17th century Spain, florid decorative detailing was more tightly knit to the structure, thus precluding concerns of superfluity. A remarkable convergence of Spanish, French, and Dutch Baroque aesthetics may be seen in the Abbey of Averbode (1667). Another characteristic example is the Church of St. Michel at Louvain (1650–70), with its exuberant two-story façade, clusters of half-columns, and the complex aggregation of French-inspired sculptural detailing.

English Architecture in the Baroque Period

English architecture during the 17th century can be characterized by its use of Palladian, Jacobean, and English Baroque styles.

Learning Objectives

Define the architecture of 17th century England

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Inigo Jones is known for introducing Palladian architecture to England, a highly symmetrical style based on the principles of formal Classical temple architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans.
- Popular during the early 17th century, the Jacobean style can be classified by its adoption of decadent and detailed Renaissance motifs such as columns and pilasters , round arch arcades , and flat roofs with openwork parapets , as seen in Hatfield House.
- The architect Sir Christopher Wren was responsible for the genesis of the English Baroque style; after the Great Fire of London in 1666, he rebuilt many of the city's churches, such as St. Paul's Cathedral .
- English Baroque architecture can be characterized by heavy structures adorned with elaborate decoration; compared to the contemporary Baroque of the European continent, however, it tends to be relatively plain, with more Classical subtleties.

Key Terms

- **arcade**: A row of arches.
- **parapet**: Part of a perimeter that extends above the roof.
- **pilaster**: A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached; it gives the appearance of a support but is only for decoration.

English Architecture in the 17th Century

The architecture in England during the 17th century saw a continuation of the use of Classical forms , which eventually gave way to a uniform style, derived chiefly from Italy and exemplified predominantly in the work of Inigo Jones. Jacobean architecture was prominent in the first quarter of the 17th century, and English Baroque architecture, a distinctly English take on the Italian Baroque style, became prevalent during the later part of the 17th century following the Great Fire of London.

Development of English Baroque

Inigo Jones and Palladian Architecture

Palladian architecture is highly symmetrical and based on the principles of formal Classical temple architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was a style seen during the 17th century in England and became truly prominent in the 18th century. Inigo Jones, one of the first significant English architects, is known for introducing the Italian Renaissance style to England. He is responsible for the Queen's House at Greenwich (1635) and the Banqueting House in the Palace of Whitehall (1622), which he designed based on the work of Palladio, an influential Italian Classical-style architect; its ceiling was painted by Peter Paul Rubens.

The Queen's House at Greenwich: The Queen's House at Greenwich was built by Inigo Jones, one of the first significant English architects known for introducing the Italian Renaissance style to England.

Jacobean Architecture

The second phase of Renaissance architecture in England is termed the Jacobean style. This style was popular during the first quarter of the 17th century during the reign of King James I. Chronologically following the Elizabethan style, the Jacobean style can be classified by its adoption of decadent and detailed Renaissance motifs such as columns and pilasters, round arch arcades, and flat roofs with openwork parapets. These classical motifs were, however, not strictly applied (as they were by Inigo Jones) but used rather freely and synthesized with elements of Elizabethan style architecture. Architectural examples of the style include Hatfield House, Knole House, and Holland House by John Thorpe.

Hatfield House: South facing view of Hatfield House, an example of English Jacobean architecture, showcasing the decadent and detailed Renaissance motifs.

English Baroque

The later 17th century saw Baroque architecture come to prominence in a style that is termed English Baroque. It was the architect Christopher Wren, one of the most acclaimed English architects in history, who was responsible for the genesis of the English Baroque style. When the Great Fire of London in 1666 forced much of the city to be rebuilt, Wren was hired to replace many of the churches. His most ambitious construction, St. Paul's Cathedral, was a magnificent piece of architecture and is the only English cathedral in the Classical tradition.

St. Paul's Cathedral: Built by Christopher Wren, St. Paul's Cathedral is the only English cathedral in the Classical tradition.

Characteristics

Popular from 1666 to about 1715, English Baroque architecture is characterized by heavy structures adorned with elaborate decoration; compared to the contemporary Baroque of the European continent, however, it tends to be relatively plain, with more Classical subtleties. Baroque country houses, such as Chatsworth House by William Talman and Castle Howard by Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, began to appear in the 1690s. The most significant architects after Wren were Sir John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor, who built Castle Howard (1699) and Blenheim Palace (1705).

Chatsworth House, England: English Baroque architecture, as seen in Chatsworth House, can be characterized by heavy structures adorned with elaborate decoration; however, it tends to be relatively plain, with more Classical subtleties, compared to the Baroque architecture of the continent that was being built at the same time.

French Architecture in the Baroque Period: Versailles

The Palace of Versailles was built during King Louis XIV's reign and contains 700 rooms, extensive gardens, and lavish decoration.

Learning Objectives

Identify the most impressive features of Versailles and those artistically responsible

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Palace of Versailles was executed in the French Baroque style , characterized by its large curved forms , twisted columns , high domes , and complicated shapes.
- The architect for the palace was Louis Le Vau, the interior decorator was Charles Le Brun, and the landscape designer was Andre Le Notre.
- Interior design from this period is known as Louis XIV style. Originated by Le Brun, it is characterized by richly woven red and gold fabrics or brocades , heavy gilded plaster molding , large sculpted side boards, and heavy marbling.
- The gardens at Versailles cover nearly 2,000 acres of land and were executed in the French formal garden style, or *jardin a la francaise*.
- Notable features of the palace include the Hall of Mirrors and the Grande Canal.

Key Terms

- **parterre**: A garden with paths between flowerbeds.
- **brocade**: A thick, heavy fabric into which raised patterns have been woven.
- **molding**: A plane or curved narrow surface, either sunk or projecting, used for decoration by means of the lights and shades upon its surface and to conceal joints, especially between unlike materials.

Overview: Versailles

The Palace of Versailles is an opulent palace built by Louis XIV that contains 700 rooms, extensive gardens, and lavish decoration. Initially a small hunting lodge built by his father, Louis XIV transformed Versailles with four intensive building campaigns over his reign. The formal aesthetic of the palace was meant to glorify France and show the power and greatness of the self-proclaimed Sun King, Louis XIV. The architect for the palace was Louis Le Vau, the interior decorator was Charles Le Brun, and the landscape designer was Andre Le Notre. These three artists had worked together previously on the private Chateau Vaux le Vicomte for the king's minister of finance before he was imprisoned. In 1682, Versailles was transformed into the official residence of the king, and such notable features of the palace as the Hall of Mirrors and the Grande Canal were built.

The Art and Artists of Versailles

The Architecture: Louis Le Vau

The Palace of Versailles was executed in the French Baroque style by architect Louis Le Vau, a French Classical architect who worked for King Louis XIV. French Baroque architectural style is characterized by its large curved forms, twisted columns, high domes, and complicated shapes. In comparison to the Baroque architecture of the rest of Europe, it is commonly thought to be more restrained and characterized by its mixture of lavish details on symmetrical and orderly buildings.

The Interior Design: Charles Le Brun

Charles Le Brun was the interior decorator for the Palace of Versailles, as well as first painter to the king. Louis XIV declared Le Brun the "greatest painter of all time," and Le Brun worked on such notable features of the palace as the Halls of War and Peace, the Ambassadors' Staircase, and the Great Hall of Mirrors. Interior design from this period is known as Louis XIV style, originated by Le Brun, and was characterized by richly woven red and gold fabrics or brocades, heavy gilded plaster molding, large sculpted side boards, and heavy marbling.

Louis XIV style: This elaborate bench showcases the style of Louis XIV at Versailles, which is characterized by richly woven red and gold fabrics or brocades, heavy gilded plaster molding, large sculpted side boards, and heavy marbling.

The Hall of Mirrors is the central gallery of the Palace of Versailles and is one of the most famous rooms in the world. The main feature of this room is a series of 17 mirrored arches that reflect 17 arcaded windows overlooking the gardens. Each arch contains 21 mirrors. The arches are fixed between marble pilasters upon which bronze symbols of France are embedded.

The Hall of Mirrors: The main feature of the Hall of Mirrors is a series of 17 mirrored arches that reflect 17 arcaded windows overlooking the gardens. Each arch contains 21 mirrors.

The Gardens: Andre Le Notre

The landscape design at the Palace of Versailles is one of the most extravagant in history. Headed by Andre Le Notre, the gardens at Versailles cover nearly 2,000 acres of land and were executed in the French formal garden style, or *jardin a la francaise*. This style is characterized by its meticulously manicured lawns, parterres of flowers, numerous fountains, and sculptures.

A common feature of sculpture and decoration at Versailles is the use of classical mythology as allegory . The Bassin de Latone was designed by Le Notre and sculpted by Gaspard and Balthazar Marsy between 1668–1670. This fountain depicts scenes from Ovid's Metamorphoses, chosen as allegories to revolts during the king's reign. The Bassin d'Apollon is another fountain that depicts the sun god driving his chariot to light the sky. The Grotte de Thetys is a freestanding structure with an interior decorated in elaborate shell-work to represent the myth of Apollo.

Gardens at Versailles: Plan for the extravagant gardens at the Palace of Versailles.

The Grande Canal is a notable feature of the gardens, with an impressive length of 1,500 x 62 meters. King Louis XIV ordered the construction of “little Venice ” on the Grand Canal, which housed yachts, gondolas, and gondoliers received from Venice. It also served a functional purpose by gathering the water that drained from the fountains and redistributing it to the gardens by horse-powered pump.

The Grande Commande is a series of 24 statues that were commissioned by Louis XIV to decorate the gardens. The statues illustrate the classic quaternities (sets of 4) at the time of the Four Humors, the Four Parts of the Day, the Four Parts of the World, The Four Forms of Poetry, the Four Elements, and the Four Seasons. Four additional sculptures depict abductions from classical mythology.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 21.2: Architecture of the Baroque Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

21.3: Sculpture of the Baroque Period

Italian Sculpture in the Baroque Period

Baroque sculpture dominated Italy in the 1600s and was characterized by sculpture in the round.

Learning Objectives

Indicate the attributes of Baroque sculpture in 17th century Italy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Baroque sculpture attempted to capture dynamic movement of human figures, spiraling around an empty central vortex or reaching outwards into the surrounding space .
- Baroque sculpture was meant to be viewed from all angles and displayed centrally, rather than against a wall.
- Gian Lorenzo Bernini was the most important Italian sculptor during the Baroque Period, both in Rome and throughout Europe.
- Bernini's sculpture of French ruler Louis XIV set the standard for royal portraiture for a century.

Key Terms

- **relief**: A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.
- **relief sculpture**: A type of sculpture that gives the impression that the sculpted material has been raised above the background plane.

Overview: Baroque Sculpture

Baroque sculpture is associated with the Baroque cultural movement in 17th century Europe. In Baroque sculpture, groups of figures assumed new importance, and there was a dynamic movement and energy of human forms—they spiraled around an empty central vortex or reached outwards into the surrounding space. Baroque sculpture often had multiple ideal viewing angles and reflected a general continuation of the Renaissance's move away from relief to sculpture created in the round . They were typically designed to be placed in the middle of a large space; for example, elaborate fountains such as Bernini's *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* (Rome, 1651) or those in the Gardens of Versailles were a Baroque specialty.

A great deal of Baroque sculpture added extra-sculptural elements; for example, concealed lighting, water fountains, or fused sculpture and architecture that created a transformative experience for the viewer . Artists saw themselves as working in the classical tradition and admired Hellenistic and later Roman sculpture.

The Work of Bernini

Gian Lorenzo Bernini was the dominating figure of the age. Bernini's sculptural output was immense and varied. The *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* in the Cornaro Chapel, *Santa Maria della Vittoria*, and the now-hidden *Constantine* at the base of the Scala Regia (which he designed) were among his best known works. Bernini was also given the commission for the Tomb of Pope Urban VIII in St Peters.

Ecstasy of St. Theresa by Bernini: Bernini was the most prominent sculptor of the Baroque period.

In 1665, at the height of his fame, Bernini traveled to Paris for several months in response to repeated requests for his works by King Louis XIV. His international popularity was such that the streets were lined with admiring crowds during his walks in the city. Here, Bernini presented some designs for the east front of the Louvre, which were ultimately rejected. He soon lost favor at the French court as he praised the art and architecture of Italy over that of France. The sole work remaining from his time in Paris is a bust of Louis XIV, which set the standard for royal portraiture for a century.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Gian Lorenzo Bernini. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gian_Lorenzo_Bernini%23Rise_to_master_sculptor. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Baroque sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gian Lorenzo Bernini. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gian_Lorenzo_Bernini%23Rise_to_master_sculptor. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/relief-sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 21.3: Sculpture of the Baroque Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

21.4: Painting of the Baroque Period

Italian Painting in the Baroque Period

Baroque painting emerged in the 16th century and became extremely popular in the 17th century; the Roman High Baroque lasted from 1623 to 1667.

Learning Objectives

Name the most important Italian painters of the 17th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Baroque painting is the painting associated with the Baroque cultural movement, which began in Italy in the 17th century.
- In its most typical manifestations, Baroque painting is characterized by great drama, rich, deep color, and intense light and dark shadows.
- Caravaggio was an important figure in early Baroque painting during the 16th and 17th centuries and inspired many mimics, known as Caravaggisti .
- Pietro da Cortona was the most influential painter of the High Baroque Period.
- In the later 17th century, artists such as Giordano increasingly produced monumental ceiling frescoes .

Key Terms

- **tenebrism**: A style of painting using very pronounced light contrast (chiaroscuro), with darkness a dominating feature of the image
- **fresco**: In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to wet or fresh lime mortar or plaster.

Overview: Baroque Painting

Baroque painting is associated with the Baroque cultural movement, which began in Italy in the 17th century. It encompasses a great range of styles , as most important and major painting during the period beginning around 1600 and continuing into the early 18th century is identified today as Baroque painting. In its most typical manifestations, Baroque art is characterized by great drama, rich, deep color, and intense light and dark shadows.

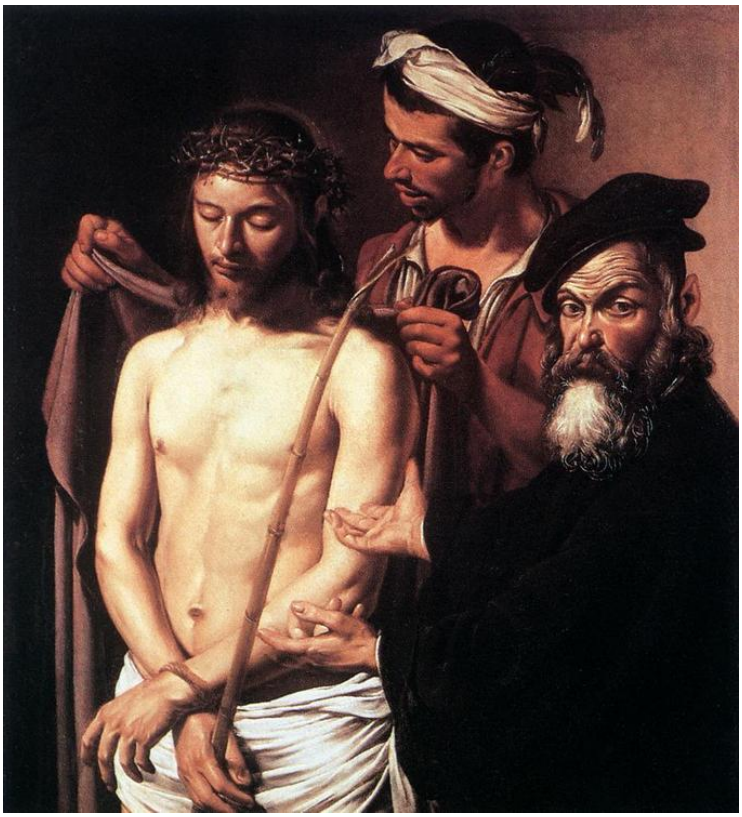
Relevant Italian Painters of the Time

Caravaggio

Caravaggio (1571–1610), born and trained in Milan, stands as one of the most original and influential contributors to late 16th century and early 17th century European painting. He was known for painting figures, even those of classical or religious themes, in contemporary clothing, or as ordinary men and women. His inclusion of the seedier side of life was in marked contrast to the trends of the time. He used tenebrism and stark contrasts between partially lit figures and dark backgrounds to dramatize the effect.

Some of Caravaggio's most famous paintings include *The Calling of St. Mathew, St. Thomas, The Conversion of St. Paul, The Entombment,* and *The Crowning of the Christ.* His use of light and shadow was emulated by the Caravaggisti, the followers of Caravaggio, such as Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639), Artemisia Gentileschi (1592–1652/3), Mattia Preti, Carlo Saraceni, and Bartolomeo Manfredi.

The Calling of Saint Matthew by Caravaggio: *The Calling of Saint Matthew* shows Caravaggio's use of tenebrism and stark contrasts between partially lit figures and dark backgrounds to dramatize the effect.



Ecce Homoc by Caravaggio, 1605: Example of a Baroque painting by Caravaggio

Other Artists

Other influential Italian painters during this early period who influenced the development of Baroque painting include Peter Paul Rubens, Giovanni Lanfranco, and Guercino. Other artists, such as Guido Reni and Domenico Zampieri, pursued a more classical

approach. Baroque painters such as Cortona, Giovan Battista Gaulli, and Ciro Ferri continued to flourish alongside the classical trend represented by painters such as Sacchi and Nicholas Poussin. Even a classicist painter like Sacchi's pupil Carlo Maratta was influenced in his use of color by the Baroque.

The principal painter of the Roman High Baroque, a period that spanned several papal reigns from 1623 to 1667, was Pietro da Cortona. His baroque manner is clearly evident in paintings that he executed for the Sacchetti family in the 1620s and the vault fresco in the Palazzo Barberini (finished in 1639) in Rome .

Monumental ceiling frescoes mainly date to the latter part of the 17th century. Some were dramatically illusionistic , such as Gaulli's nave fresco (1674–9) in the church of the Gesu and Andrea Pozzo's nave vault (1691–4) in Sant'Ignazio, both in Rome. Luca Giordano (1634–1705) was born in Naples and was so prodigious in his output of paintings that he was known as 'Luca fa presto' ("Luke fast work").

The Creation of Man, fresco by Giordano in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence, 1684–1686.: Giordano was an extremely prolific Italian Baroque painter.

Spanish Painting in the Baroque Period

The Spanish Golden Age is a period of flourishing in arts, coinciding with the political rise and decline of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty.

Learning Objectives

Define the Spanish Golden Age of painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Spanish Golden Age began in 1492, with the end of the Reconquista and the sea voyages of Christopher Columbus to the New World . Politically, it ended no later than 1659, with the Treaty of the Pyrenees ratified between France and Habsburg , Spain.
- The Italian holdings and relationships made by Queen Isabella's husband and later Spain's sole monarch, Ferdinand of Aragon, launched a steady traffic of intellectuals across the Mediterranean between Valencia, Seville, and Florence.
- Spanish art contained a strong mark of mysticism and religion that was encouraged by the Counter-Reformation and the patronage of Spain's strongly Catholic monarchs and aristocracy. The Habsburgs, both in Spain and Austria, were great patrons of art in their countries.
- Diego Velázquez and Francisco de Zurbarán are often considered by scholars as the influential founders of a uniquely Spanish style of painting during the Baroque era.

Key Terms

- **Counter-Reformation**: The period of Catholic revival beginning with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and ending at the close of the Thirty Years' War (1648); sometimes considered a response to the Protestant Reformation.
- **Habsburg**: A Swabian noble family named after it, which became the ruling (hereditary) dynasty of Austria, at times other countries (mainly in Iberia and the former Burgundian territories), and supplied successive (elected) emperors of the Holy Roman Empire.

Overview: The Spanish Golden Age

The Spanish Golden Age is a period of flourishing in arts and literature in Spain, coinciding with the Baroque era and the political rise and decline of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty . It began no earlier than 1492 with the end of the *Reconquista* (Reconquest), the sea voyages of Christopher Columbus to the New World, and the publication of Antonio de Nebrija's *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (Grammar of the Castilian Language). Politically, it ended no later than 1659 with the Treaty of the Pyrenees, ratified between France and Habsburg, Spain.

Spain, in the time of the Italian Renaissance , had seen few great artists come to its shores. The Italian holdings and relationships made by Ferdinand of Aragon, Queen Isabella's husband and later Spain's sole monarch, launched a steady traffic of intellectuals across the Mediterranean between Valencia, Seville, and Florence. Luis de Morales, one of the leading exponents of Spanish Mannerist painting, retained a distinctly Spanish style in his work reminiscent of medieval art . Spanish art, particularly that of Morales, contained a strong mark of mysticism and religion that was encouraged by the Counter-Reformation and the patronage of Spain's strongly Catholic monarchs and aristocracy.

Artists of the Golden Age of Spain

The Habsburgs, both in Spain and Austria, were great patrons of art in their countries. Diego Velázquez and Francisco de Zurbarán are often considered by scholars as the influential founders of a uniquely Spanish style of painting during the Baroque era.

Diego Velázquez

Diego Velázquez is widely regarded as one of Spain's most important and influential artists. He was an individualistic artist of the contemporary Baroque period and most well-known as a portrait artist. In addition to numerous renditions of scenes of historical and cultural significance, he painted scores of portraits of the Spanish royal family, other notable European figures, and commoners, culminating in the production of his masterpiece *Las Meninas* (1656). Velázquez was a court painter for King Philip IV and found increasingly high demand for his portraits from statesmen, aristocrats, and clergymen across Europe. His portraits of the King, his chief minister, the Count-duke of Olivares, and the Pope himself demonstrated a belief in artistic realism and a style comparable to many of the Dutch masters.

Philip IV in Brown and Silver, 1632: Velázquez is perhaps most well-known for his many famous portraits, including this one of King Philip IV.

Velazquez's most famous painting, however, is the celebrated *Las Meninas* (1656), in which the artist includes himself as one of the subjects. *Las Meninas* (Spanish for "The Ladies in Waiting") is a painting with complex and enigmatic composition that raises questions about reality and illusion, creating an uncertain relationship between the viewer and the figures depicted. Because of these complexities, *Las Meninas* has been one of the most widely analyzed works in Western painting.

The painting shows a large room in the Royal Alcazar of Madrid during the reign of King Philip IV and presents several figures, most identifiable from the Spanish court, captured in a particular moment as if in a snapshot. Some look out of the canvas towards the viewer, while others interact among themselves. The young Infanta Margaret Theresa is surrounded by her entourage of maids of honor, chaperone, bodyguard, two other figures, and a dog. Just behind them, Velázquez portrays himself working at a large canvas. Velázquez looks outwards, beyond the pictorial space to where a viewer of the painting would stand. In the background there is a mirror that reflects the upper bodies of the king and queen. They appear to be placed outside the picture space in a position similar to that of the viewer, although some scholars have speculated that their image is a reflection from the painting Velázquez is shown working on.

Las Meninas, 1656 (English: The Ladies in Waiting): In his most celebrated painting, Valzquez's self-portrait is included on the left.

Religion in the Art of the Spanish Golden Age: Francisco de Zurbarán

The religious element in Spanish art, in many circles, grew in importance with the Counter-Reformation. The austere, ascetic, and severe work of Francisco de Zurbarán exemplified this thread in Spanish art, along with the work of composer Tomás Luis de Victoria. Philip IV actively patronized artists who agreed with his views on the Counter-Reformation and religion. The mysticism of Zurbarán's work—influenced by Saint Theresa of Avila—became a hallmark of Spanish art in later generations.

The Birth of the Virgin: *The Birth of the Virgin*, by Francisco de Zurbarán, demonstrates the religious themes, particular the devotion to the Virgin Mary, that pervaded Counter-Reformation Spanish artwork.

Influenced by Caravaggio and the Italian masters, Zurbarán devoted himself to an artistic expression of religion and faith. He is known primarily for his religious paintings depicting monks, nuns, and martyrs, as well as for his still-lifes. Zurbarán gained the nickname *Spanish Caravaggio*, owing to the forceful, realistic use of chiaroscuro in which he excelled.

Saint Francis in Meditation, c. 1631–1640, National Gallery: Zurbarán's painting of Saint Francis of Assisi is notable for its use of chiaroscuro, or high contrast between light and dark.

His paintings of St. Francis of Assisi, the immaculate conception, and the crucifixion of Christ reflected a third facet of Spanish culture in the 17th century, against the backdrop of religious war across Europe. Zurbarán broke from Velázquez's sharp realist interpretation of art and looked, to some extent, to the emotive content of the painter El Greco and the earlier Mannerist painters for inspiration and technique, though Zurbarán respected and maintained the lighting and physical nuance of Velázquez.

French Painting in the Baroque Period

17th century painting in France was influenced by Italian Baroque sensibilities as well as the Classical tastes of the powerful monarchy.

Learning Objectives

Describe the changing nature of 17th century French painting and its most important practitioners

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- King Louis XIV established the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, which propagated a style of art with distinctly Classical affectation. Important painters of 17th century France include Simon Vouet, Charles Le Brun, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Georges de la Tour.
- Simon Vouet is known for introducing Baroque style painting to France. Charles Le Brun was a student of Vouet and the most important painter in the court of King Louis XIV. He was responsible for the interior decoration at the Palace of Versailles.
- Nicolas Poussin is known for his Classical style paintings that favor clarity, logic, order, and clean lines over color. Claude Lorrain is known particularly for his work in landscape paintings.
- Georges de la Tour was a French Baroque painter known for painting religious chiaroscuro scenes.

Key Terms

- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **altarpiece**: A work of art suspended above and behind a table used for religious purposes; (altar) in a church.

Overview: The Baroque Era in France

17th century painting in France was influenced by Italian Baroque sensibilities as well as the Classical tastes of the powerful monarchy. These two strong influences resulted in a style that was unique to France and culminated in the art produced for King Louis XIV. The reign of Louis XIV saw a shift from Mannerist and Baroque styles popular in the early part of the century, during the reign of Louis XIII, toward a more prescribed Classical style. Louis XIV established royal control over artisanal production in France, prohibiting the purchase of luxury goods from abroad. He also established the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, which maintained a hierarchy of genres in painting and a distinctly Classical flavor.

Influential French Painters

Important painters of 17th century France include Simon Vouet, Charles Le Brun, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Georges de la Tour. 17th century painting in France was divided: on one hand there was influence from the Italian Baroque style as seen in the work of de la Tour; on the other was a distinctive turn towards a rigid, Classical style that was favored by the monarchy, and exemplified by the works of Le Brun, Poussin, and Lorrain. The convergence of these two styles gave 17th century painting an aesthetic tone that was wholly unique to France.

Simon Vouet and Charles Le Brun

Simon Vouet is known for introducing Baroque style painting to France. He studied in Italy and learned the techniques of the Italian masters, which he imbued with his own sensibilities. He was made “premier peintre du Roi” by Louis XIII, who commissioned numerous works from him. Charles Le Brun was Vouet’s most influential pupil and was to become an important painter in the court of King Louis XIV. Le Brun worked primarily for Louis XIV, and his most important works reside at the Palace of Versailles. Mostly producing battle pieces and altarpieces , Le Brun’s paintings exemplify a synthesis of Baroque and Classical styles.

Charles Le Brun, *The Conquest of Franche-Comté*: Charles Le Brun worked primarily for King Louis XIV, and his most important works reside at the Palace of Versailles. Mostly producing battle pieces and altarpieces, Le Brun's paintings exemplify a synthesis of Baroque and Classical styles.

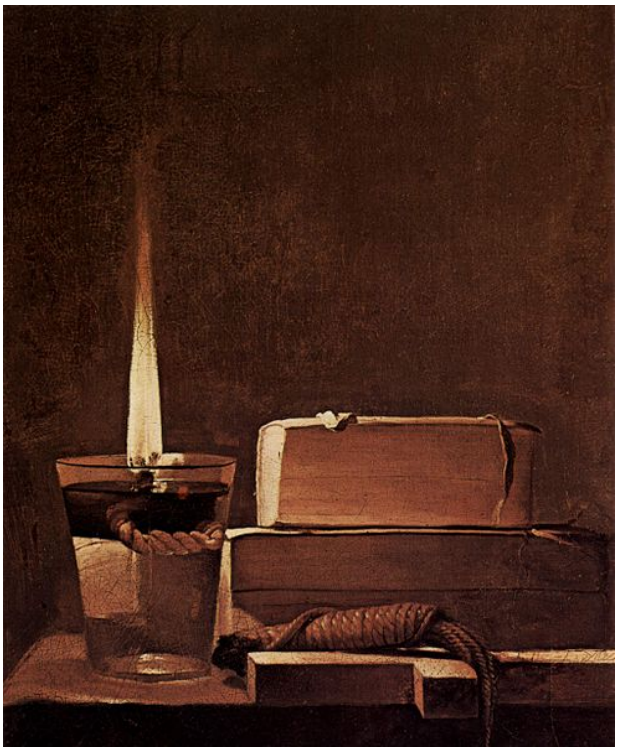
Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain

Nicolas Poussin is known for his Classical style paintings created in 17th century France. His work features clarity, logic, order, and clean lines over color, serving as a counterpoint to Baroque style painting. He spent most of his life working in Rome and became a favorite painter of King Louis XIV. Claude Lorrain is known particularly for his work in landscape paintings. He earned the patronage of Pope Urban VIII, after which his fame grew rapidly. Lorrain and Poussin were friends and were known to have traveled the Italian countryside together.

Nicolas Poussin, *Echo and Narcissus*: Nicolas Poussin is known for his Classical style paintings created in 17th century France. His work features clarity, logic, order, and clean lines over color.

Georges de la Tour

Georges de la Tour was a French Baroque painter known for painting religious chiaroscuro scenes lit by candlelight. His work shows a great deal of influence from Caravaggio, characterized by the painted effects of light and dark, but is unique in that he applies this technique to genre subjects.



Georges De La Tour, *Büende Maria Magdalena (Magdalena Terf)*:

Flemish Painting in the Baroque Period

The style of painting produced in Flanders during the 17th century is known as Flemish Baroque.

Learning Objectives

Name different genres within the Flemish Baroque and its representative painters

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Flemish Baroque painting is notable for the fact that it was separated into the different thematic categories of history, portraiture, genre , landscape, and still life .
- Peter Paul Rubens was the preeminent painter of the Flemish Baroque style ; he was the dominant artist of history painting and drew influence from Italian painting.
- The paintings of Adriaen Brouwer exemplified the genre painting of 17th century Flanders . They depicted scenes of the everyday life of peasants and were notable for their expressive facial studies.
- The vanitas , a type of still life painting that is meant to illustrate the meaninglessness of earthly life and the transience of all earthly pursuits, became very popular in 17th century Flemish painting.

Key Terms

- **monumental**: Large, grand, and imposing.

Overview: Flemish Baroque

The style of painting produced in Flanders during the 17th century is known as Flemish Baroque. This style was produced between about 1585, when the Dutch Republic split from the Habsburg Spain regions of the south, until about 1700, when the Habsburg rule ended after the death of King Charles II. Antwerp—the home of Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony Van Dyck, and Jacob Jordaens—figured prominently as a point of artistic production during this time, as did Brussels and Ghent to a lesser extent. Peter Paul Rubens, the preeminent painter of the Flemish Baroque style, had a strong influence on the artistic aesthetic of the 17th century.

Categories of Flemish Painting

Flemish Baroque painting is notable for the fact that it was separated into different thematic categories, and artists of the time tended to specialize in one of these areas. These genres included history, portraiture, genre, landscape, and still life paintings.

History Painting

History painting, considered the most noble genre during the 17th century, was comprised of depictions of historical, biblical, mythological, and allegorical scenes. Peter Paul Rubens was the dominant painter in this category, though his student Anthony Van Dyck also became prominent. More than in any other category, Flemish history painters continued to draw influence from Italian painting. Rubens spent nine years in Italy studying the work of the masters, and he introduced the monumental hunting scene to painting. This is exemplified in his work *Wolf and Fox Hunt*, which depicts a noble battle on a large scale and was inspired by his study of classical antiquity .

Wolf and Fox Hunt by Peter Paul Rubens: *Wolf and Fox Hunt* is an example of the monumental hunting scene Rubens introduced to painting.

Portrait Paintings

Portrait paintings were, for the most part, monumental or life sized, though the group and family portrait came into prominence during the 17th century. Although he was not a portrait painter, Rubens completed some early works in this category. He also exerted influence through his student, Anthony Van Dyck, who became the court painter for Charles I of England and an influence on subsequent portraiture in England.

Genre Painting

Genre paintings depict scenes from everyday life and were very common in 17th century Flanders. These paintings feature figures with no specific identity, commonly engaged in activities associated with “the peasant life.” Many genre artists follow the tradition of Peter Brueghel the Elder in their depiction of the lower classes. The paintings of Adriaen Brouwer, which often show peasants fighting and drinking, serve as an example of Flemish genre painting. Brouwer is known for painting his subjects in interior, rather than exterior, scenes. He was also known for his expressive facial studies, characteristic of a genre called “tronies” (faces) and exemplified in works such as *The Bitter Drink.*

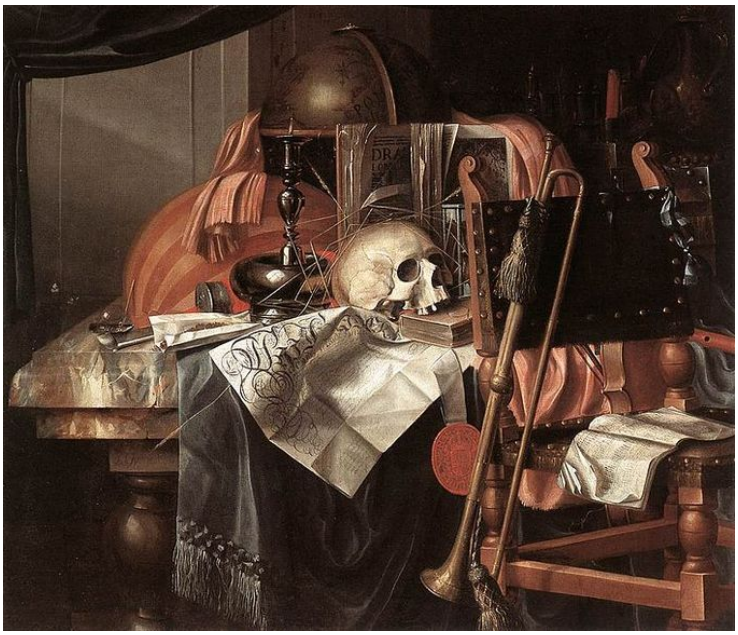
Village Lawyer by Peter Brueghel: A genre painting by Peter Brueghel.

Landscapes

Landscape painting was another major category in the 17th century. The style developed from earlier 16th century Flemish landscape paintings, which were not particularly realistic and employed the semi-aerial view typical of Peter Brueghel the Elder. Architectural interior painting also became popular around this time, developing out of the works of Hans Vredman de Vries and depicting the realistic interiors of existing churches and cathedrals .

Still Lifes

Floral still life painting was widespread in 17th century Flanders, popularized by Brueghel the Elder around 1600. His sons, Jan Brueghel the Younger and Ambrosius Brueghel, were also known flower specialists of the time. Other subjects or subcategories of still life painting included the banquet still life, the animal still life, and garland scenes. Still life paintings often had an underlying moralistic message concerning the brevity of life, a trait exemplified by the “vanitas.” A vanitas is a symbolic still life painting that is meant to illustrate the meaninglessness of earthly life and the transience of all earthly pursuits. Vanitas paintings were very popular in 17th century Flemish and Dutch work, and they often depict symbols such as skulls, flowers, rotting fruit, clocks, watches, smoke, and hourglasses, all of which are meant to convey the ephemeral nature of life on earth.



Vanitas Painting: An example of a vanitas from the 17th century by Franciscus Gysbrechts.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Luca Giordano. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Luca_Giordano. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The_Calling_of_Saint_Matthew_by_Carvaggio.jpg. **Provided by**: Wiki Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo_Merisi_da_Caravaggio#/media/File:The_Calling_of_Saint_Matthew_by_Carvaggio.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- CaravaggioEcceHomo. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CaravaggioEcceHomo.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baroque Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Calling of St Matthew (Caravaggio). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Calling_of_St_Matthew_(Caravaggio). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Italian Baroque art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Baroque_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fresco. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fresco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/tenebrism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Francisco de Zurbaru00e1n 018. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Zurbar%C3%A1n_018.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Velazquez1632philipIV.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Diego_Vel%C3%A1zquez#/media/File:Velazquez1632philipIV.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Las Meninas, by Diego Velu00e1zquez, from Prado in Google Earth. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Las_Meninas,_by_Diego_Vel%C3%A1zquez,_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 584px-Francisco_de_Zurbar%C3%A1n_053.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Zurbar%C3%A1n_053.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Spanish art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_art%23Painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spanish Golden Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Golden_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Counter-Reformation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Habsburg. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Habsburg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Charles Le Brun - The Conquest of Franche-Comtu00e9 - WGA12534. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Le_Brun_-_The_Conquest_of_Franche-Comt%C3%A9_-_WGA12534.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Georges de La Tour 008. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_de_La_Tour_008.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nicolas Poussin 040. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolas_Poussin_040.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nicolas Poussin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Poussin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude Lorrain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Lorrain. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Georges de La Tour. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_de_La_Tour. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- French art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/French_art%23Early_Modern_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 17th-century French art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/17th-century_French_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/altarpiece. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Franciscus Gysbrechts - Vanitas - WGA11012. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franciscus_Gysbrechts_-_Vanitas_-_WGA11012.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pieter Brueghel the Younger - Village Lawyer - WGA3633. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Brueghel_the_Younger_-_Village_Lawyer_-_WGA3633.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Wolf and Fox Hunt, Peter Paul Rubens ca 1615-21. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wolf_and_Fox_Hunt,_Peter_Paul_Rubens_ca_1615-21.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Wolf and Fox Hunt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wolf_and_Fox_Hunt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pieter Brueghel the Younger. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pieter_Brueghel_the_Younger. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dutch Golden Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_Golden_Age. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Flemish Baroque painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Flemish_Baroque_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Peter Paul Rubens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Paul_Rubens. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Counter Reformation. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter_Reformation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- allegorical. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/allegorical. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- monumental. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/monumental. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 21.4: Painting of the Baroque Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

21.5: The Dutch Painters

Ter Brugghen, van Honthorst, Hals, Leyster

Hendrick ter Brugghen, Gerrit van Honthorst, Frans Hals, and Judith Leyster were important genre painters of the Dutch Republic.

Learning Objectives

Explain the importance of ter Brugghen, van Honthorst, Hals, and Leyster to genre painting of the Dutch Republic

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ter Brugghen and Honthorst were both artists from the Dutch city of Utrecht who worked in the Caravaggisti tradition, emulating Caravaggio's dramatic use of light and shadow. Both artists were directly inspired by their travels to Italy.
- Tavern scenes and other depictions of lively entertainment were common subjects for genre painters of this period.
- Frans Hals, another well-known Dutch painter, is remembered primarily for his portraiture and his pioneering use of loose brushwork.
- Judith Leyster is one of the few recognized female artists of the Dutch Golden Age and is known for depicting female subjects in domestic interior scenes.
- Leyster's work is extremely similar to Hals, leading some historians to speculate that she may have been his apprentice.

Key Terms

- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique developed during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **Caravaggisti**: Stylistic followers of the 16th century Italian Baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.
- **Mannerism**: A style of art developed at the end of the High Renaissance, characterized by the deliberate distortion and exaggeration of perspective, especially the elongation of figures.

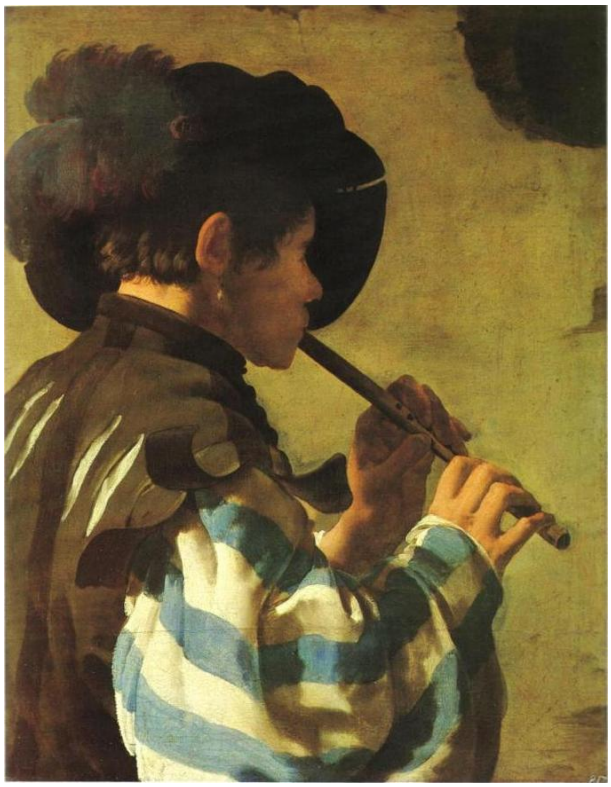
The Dutch Golden Age

The Dutch Golden Age was a period in the history of Holland generally spanning the 17th century, during and after the later part of the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) for Dutch independence. Although Dutch painting of the Golden Age comes in the general European period of Baroque painting and often shows many of its characteristics, most lacks the idealization and love of splendor typical of much Baroque work, including that of neighboring Flanders . Most work in Holland during this era, including that for which the period is best known, reflects the traditions of detailed realism inherited from Early Netherlandish painting .

A distinctive feature of the period is the proliferation of distinct genres of paintings, with the majority of artists producing the bulk of their work within one of these. The full development of this specialization is seen from the late 1620s, and the period from then until the French invasion of 1672 is the core of Golden Age painting. The Utrecht Caravaggisti Hendrick ter Brugghen and Gerrit van Honthorst, as well as Frans Hals and Judith Leyster, were genre painters of the Dutch Republic. Their work generally depicted taverns and other scenes of entertainment that catered to the tastes and interests of a growing segment of the Dutch middle class.

ter Brugghen

Hendrick Jansz ter Brugghen (1588—1629) was a Dutch painter and a leading member of the Dutch followers of Caravaggio, or the Dutch Caravaggisti. Ter Brugghen began painting at the age of 13, studying with Abraham Bloemaert, a history painter trained in Mannerism . Around 1604, ter Brugghen traveled to Italy to expand his skills like many of his Dutch counterparts. While in Rome , he could have been in direct contact with Caravaggio. He certainly studied his work, as well as that of his followers, known as the Italian Caravaggisti. Upon returning to the Dutch city of Utrecht, he worked with Gerard van Honthorst, another member of the Dutch Caravaggisti.



Flute Player by ter Brugghen, 1621: ter Brugghen, with Gerard van Honthorst, imported Caravaggio's techniques from Italy in the early 17th century.

Ter Brugghen's favorite subjects were half-length figures of drinkers or musicians, but he also produced larger-scale religious images and group portraits. He carried with him Caravaggio's influence, and his paintings have a strong dramatic use of light and shadow, as well as emotionally charged subjects. Though he died fairly young at age 41, his work was well received and highly influential in his lifetime.

The Concert by ter Brugghen (1627), 99.1 x 116.8 cm, National Gallery, London: Some of ter Brugghen's favorite subjects were half-length figures of drinkers or musicians, with a strong dramatic use of light and shadow in the style of Caravaggio.

Van Honthorst

Gerard van Honthorst (1590—1656) was born in Utrecht and also studied under Abraham Bloemaert. In 1616, Honthorst also traveled to Italy and was deeply influenced by the recent art he encountered there. Honthorst returned to Utrecht in 1620 and went

on to build a considerable reputation, both in the Dutch Republic and abroad.

Honthorst briefly became a court painter to Charles I in England in 1628. His popularity in the Netherlands was such that he opened a second studio in The Hague, where he painted portraits of members of the court and taught drawing. Honthorst cultivated the style of Caravaggio and had great skill at chiaroscuro , often painting scenes illuminated by a single candle. Apart from portraiture, he is known for painting tavern scenes with musicians, gamblers, and people eating.

The Matchmaker by Gerard van Honthorst, 1625: This painting demonstrates Honthorst's use of chiaroscuro, a style made popular by Caravaggio.

Hals

Frans Hals the Elder (c. 1582—1666) was most notable for his loose painterly brushwork, a lively style he helped introduce into Dutch art. Hals was also instrumental in the evolution of 17th century group portraiture. He is perhaps best known for his portraits, which were primarily of wealthy citizens and prominent merchants like Pieter van den Broecke and Isaac Massa. He also painted large group portraits for local civic guards and the regents of local hospitals. His pictures illustrate the various strata of society: banquets or meetings of officers, guildsmen, local councilmen from mayors to clerks, itinerant players and singers, gentlefolk, fishwives, and tavern heroes. In his group portraits, such as the *The Officers of the St Adrian Militia Company*, Hals captures each character in a different manner. Hals was fond of daylight and silvery sheen, in contrast to Rembrandt's use of golden glow effects.

The Officers of the St Adrian Militia Company by Frans Hals, 1633: This is the second painting for the Cluveniers, St. Adrian, or St. Hadrian civic guard of Haarlem, by Frans Hals; today it is considered one of the main attractions of the Frans Hals Museum.

Leyster

Judith Jans Leyster (1609—1660) was one of three significant women artists in Dutch Golden Age painting. The other two, Rachel Ruysch and Maria van Oosterwijk, were specialized painters of flower still lifes, while Leyster painted genre works, a few portraits, and a single still life . Leyster largely gave up painting after her marriage, which produced five children. Leyster was

particularly innovative in her domestic genre scenes . In them, she creates quiet scenes of women at home, which were not a popular theme in Holland until the 1650s.

A Game of Cards by Judith Leyster: Leyster's subject matter was similar to other genre painters of the period, with the exception that she tended to focus on female subjects.

Although well-known during her lifetime and esteemed by her contemporaries, Leyster and her work were largely forgotten after her death. Leyster was rediscovered in 1893 when the Louvre purchased what it thought was a Frans Hals painting, only to find it had, in fact, been painted by Judith Leyster. Some historians have asserted that Hals may have been Leyster's teacher due to the close similarity between their work; for example, Leyster's *The Merry Drinker* from 1629 has a very strong resemblance to *The Jolly Drinker* of 1627—28 by Hals.

Rembrandt

Rembrandt is remembered as one of the greatest artists in European history and the most important in the Dutch Golden Age.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Rembrandt's painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606—1669) is primarily known for portraits of his contemporaries, self-portraits, landscapes, and illustrations of scenes from the Bible.
- Rembrandt's self-portraits are exceptionally sincere, revealing, and personal, illustrating his development over time.

- Stylistically, Rembrandt's work evolved from smooth to rough over the course of his lifetime.
- The thick, coarse strokes in Rembrandt's work were unconventional at the time and poorly received by many of his contemporaries, though this technique is now viewed as essential to the emotional resonance of his work.
- Though he is remembered as the master of Dutch painting, Rembrandt's success was uneven during his lifetime.

Key Terms

- **variegated**: Streaked, spotted, or otherwise marked with a variety of color; very colorful.
- **Caravaggisti**: Stylistic followers of the 16th century Italian Baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

Overview: Rembrandt

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606—1669) was a Dutch painter and etcher during the Dutch Golden Age, a period of great wealth and cultural achievement. Though Rembrandt's later years were marked by personal tragedy and financial hardship, his etchings and paintings were popular throughout his lifetime, earning him an excellent reputation as an artist and teacher. In 1626, Rembrandt produced his first etchings, the wide dissemination of which would largely account for his international fame.

Characteristics of Rembrandt's Work

Among the more prominent characteristics of Rembrandt's work is his use of chiaroscuro , the theatrical employment of light and shadow. This technique was most likely derived from the Dutch Caravaggisti , followers of the Italian Baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio who had first used the chiaroscuro technique. Also notable are his dramatic and lively presentation of subjects, devoid of the rigid formality that his contemporaries often displayed, and a visible compassion for the human subject, irrespective of wealth and age.

Throughout his career, Rembrandt took as his primary subjects the themes of portraiture (dependent upon commissions from wealthy patrons for survival), landscape, and narrative painting. For the last, he was especially praised by his contemporaries, who extolled him as a masterly interpreter of biblical stories for his skill in representing emotions and attention to detail. His immediate family often figured prominently in his paintings, many of which had mythical, biblical, or historical themes.

Titus as a Monk by Rembrandt, 1660: Rembrandt's immediate family frequently figured in his paintings. This work features Rembrandt's son Titus as a monk.

In later years, biblical themes were still often depicted, but his emphasis shifted from dramatic group scenes to intimate portrait-like figures (such as in *James the Apostle*, 1661). In his last years, Rembrandt painted his most deeply reflective self-portraits (he painted 15 from 1652 to 1669) and several moving images of both men and women (such as *The Jewish Bride*, c. 1666) in love, in life, and before God.

The Jewish Bride, Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. : In his later years, Rembrandt painted several moving images of both men and women such as this painting of *The Jewish Bride.*

Stylistically, Rembrandt's paintings progressed from the early "smooth" manner, characterized by fine technique in the portrayal of illusionistic form , to the late "rough" treatment of richly variegated paint surfaces, which allowed for an illusionism of form suggested by the tactile quality of the paint itself. Contemporary accounts sometimes remark disapprovingly of the coarseness of Rembrandt's brushwork, and the artist himself was said to have dissuaded visitors from looking too closely at his paintings. The richly varied handling of paint, deeply layered and often apparently haphazard, suggests form and space in both an illusory and highly individual manner.

Self-Portraiture

Rembrandt’s self-portraits trace the progress from an uncertain young man, through the dapper and very successful portrait painter of the 1630s, to the troubled but massively powerful portraits of his old age. Together, they give a remarkably clear picture of the man, his appearance, and his psychological make-up, as revealed by his richly weathered face. In his portraits and self-portraits, he angles the sitter’s face in such a way that the ridge of the nose nearly always forms the line of demarcation between brightly illuminated and shadowy areas.

Self-portrait, c. 1629: Rembrandt’s earliest self-portraits portray his youthfulness and, sometimes, his uncertainty.

Self-portrait by Rembrandt, 1659: Rembrandt's numerous self-portraits provide a strong record of his development as an artist and offer insight into his personal psychology.

Landscape Art and Interior Painting

Landscape and interior genre painting of the Dutch Republic became increasingly sophisticated and realistic in the 17th century.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate Dutch landscape and interior genre painting in the 17th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The first phase of Dutch landscape painting was known as the "tonal phase," which was characterized by soft outlines , atmospheric effect, and focus on the sky.
- The " classical phase" of Dutch landscapes began in the 1650s and retained an atmospheric quality; however, they featured contrasting light and color and the frequent presence of a compositional anchor, such as a prominent tree, tower, or ship.
- Paintings featuring animals emerged as a distinctive sub- genre of Dutch landscape painting around this time.
- Romantic Italianate landscapes, featuring soft golden light, also emerged as a sub-genre of landscape painting.
- Interior genre paintings were also extremely popular during the Dutch Republic, featuring lively scenes from everyday life, such as markets, inns, taverns, and street scenes, as well as domestic interiors.
- Jan Vermeer, whose work uniquely captured lighting in interior spaces , is now the most renowned genre painter of the Dutch Republic.

Key Terms

- **atmospheric**: Evoking a particular emotional or aesthetic quality.
- **atmospheric perspective**: A technique in which an illusion of depth is created by painting more distant objects with less clarity and with a lighter tone.

- **genre**: A stylistic category, especially of literature or other artworks.

Background: Dutch and Flemish Painting

Landscape painting was a major genre in the 17th century Dutch Republic that was inspired by Flemish landscapes of the 16th century, particularly from Antwerp . These Flemish works had not been particularly realistic, most having been painted in the studio, partly from imagination, and often still using the semi-aerial view style typical of earlier Netherlandish landscape painting, in the tradition of Joachim Patinir, Herri met de Bles, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

Dutch Landscapes

A more realistic style soon developed in the Netherlands, with lower horizons making it possible to emphasize the often impressive cloud formations so typical of the region. Favorite subjects were the dunes along the western sea coast and rivers with their broad adjoining meadows where cattle grazed, often with the silhouette of a city in the distance. Winter landscapes featured frozen canals and creeks. The sea was a favorite subject as well, holding both military and trade significance. Important early figures in the move towards realism were Esaias van de Velde (1587–1630) and Hendrick Avercamp (1585–1634).

The Tonal Phase

From the late 1620s, the "tonal phase" of landscape painting began, as artists softened or blurred their outlines and concentrated on an atmospheric effect. Great prominence was given to the sky, with human figures usually either absent or small and distant. The leading artists of this style were Jan van Goyen (1596–1656), Salomon van Ruysdael (1602–1670), Pieter de Molyn (1595–1661), and, in marine painting, Simon de Vlieger (1601–1653), with a host of minor figures.

River Scene by Jan van Goyen, 1652: Jan van Goyen was influential in the "tonal phase" of Dutch landscape painting, which was characterized by softened or blurred outlines and emphasis on the sky.

The Classical Phase

From the 1650s, the "classical phase" began, retaining the atmospheric quality but with more expressive compositions and stronger contrasts of light and color. Compositions are often anchored by a single "heroic tree," windmill, tower, or ship in marine works. The leading artist of this phase was Jacob van Ruisdael (1628–1682), who produced a great quantity and variety of work, including Nordic landscapes of dark and dramatic mountain pine forests with rushing torrents and waterfalls.

Windmill at Wijk bij Duurstede: Jacob van Ruisdael (1628–1682) was one of the most prominent artists of the classical phase of Dutch landscapes.

Other Landscape Styles

Landscapes with animals in the foreground were a distinct sub-type and were painted by Aelbert Cuyp, Paulus Potter (1625–1654), Adriaen van de Velde (1636–1672), and Karel Dujardin (1626–1678), with Philips Wouwerman painting horses and riders in various settings. The cow was a symbol of prosperity to the Dutch and, apart from the horse, by far the most commonly shown animal; goats were used to indicate Italy.

Another important type of landscape, produced throughout the tonal and classical phases, was the romantic Italianate landscape, typically in more mountainous settings than are found in the Netherlands, with golden light and sometimes picturesque Mediterranean and ruins. Jan Both (d. 1652), who had been to Rome and worked with French painter Claude Lorrain, was a leading developer of this sub-genre. Italianate landscapes were popular as prints, and more landscape paintings by painter Nicolaes Berchem were reproduced in engravings during the period itself than those of any other artist.

A Southern Landscape with a Ruin by Jan Both: Both was known for working in the Italianate landscape style.

Dutch Interior Genre Painting

Apart from landscape painting, the development and enormous popularity of genre painting is the most distinctive feature of Dutch painting during this period. These genre paintings represented scenes or events from everyday life, such as markets, domestic

interiors, parties, inn scenes, and street scenes.

Genre painting developed from the realism and detailed background activity of Early Netherlandish painting , which Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder were among the first to turn into their principal subjects. The style reflected the increasing prosperity of Dutch society, and settings grew steadily more comfortable, opulent, and carefully depicted as the century progressed.

Adriaen Brouwer is acknowledged as the Flemish master of peasant tavern scenes. Before Brouwer, peasants were typically depicted outdoors; he usually shows them in a plain and dim interior. Other artists whose common subjects were intimate interior scenes included Nicolaes Maes, Gerard ter Borch, and Pieter de Hooch. Jan Vermeer specialized in domestic interior scenes of middle class life; though he was long a very obscure figure, he is now the most highly regarded genre painter of Dutch history.

The Milkmaid by Vermeer, 1658: Vermeer is a confirmed master of Dutch genre painting known for his interior scenes of middle class life.

Still Life Painting

Still life painting flourished during the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic.

Learning Objectives

Discuss themes and attributes of 17th century Dutch still life painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ambrosius Bosschaert was one of the early still life painters of the Dutch Republic.
- Still lifes presented opportunities for painters to demonstrate their abilities in working with difficult textures and complex forms .
- The *vanitas* theme, a moral message frequently found in still life painting, alluded to the fleeting nature of life.
- In the mid-16th century, the *pronkstilleven* style emerged, focusing on ornate and exotic objects.
- Still lifes were frequently drawn by copying flowers in books, as the Dutch were leaders in scientific and botanical drawings and illustrations.

Key Terms

- **vanitas**: A type of still life painting, symbolic of mortality and characteristic of Dutch painting in the 16th and 17th centuries.

- **Pronkstilleven**: A style of ornate still life painting produced in Holland in the 17th century.

Overview: Dutch Still Life Painting

The Dutch still life tradition was largely initiated by Ambrosius Bosschaert (1573–1621), a Flemish-born flower painter who had settled in the north by the beginning of the period and founded a dynasty . Early still lifes were relatively brightly lit, with bouquets of flowers arranged in a simple way. From the mid-15th century, arrangements that could fairly be called Baroque , usually against a dark background, became more popular, exemplified by the works of Willem van Aelst (1627–1683). Painters from Leiden, The Hague, and Amsterdam particularly excelled in the genre . In addition to still life paintings, the Dutch led the world in botanical and other scientific drawings, prints, and book illustrations at this time.

Flowers in a Porcelain Vase by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder: Bosschaert was an early still life painter who established a dynasty of flower painters.

Themes of Still Lifes

Still lifes offered a great opportunity to display skill in painting textures and surfaces in great detail, and with highly realistic light effects. Food of all textures, colors, and shapes—silver cutlery, intricate patterns, and subtle folds in table cloths and flowers—all challenged painters.

Flower paintings were a popular sub-genre of still life and were favored by prominent women artists, such as Maria van Oosterwyck and Rachel Ruysch. Dead game, as well as birds painted live but studied from death, were another sub-genre, as were dead fish, a staple of the Dutch diet. Abraham van Beijeren painted this subject frequently.

Virtually all still lifes had a moralistic message, usually concerning the brevity of life. This is known as the *vanitas* theme. The vanitas theme was included in explicit symbols, such as a skull, or less obvious symbols such as a half-peeled lemon (representing

life: sweet in appearance but bitter to taste). Flowers wilt and food decays, and silver is of no use to the soul. Nevertheless, the force of this message seems less powerful in the more elaborate pieces of the second half of the century.

Initially, the subjects of still life paintings were typically mundane; however, beginning in the mid-century, the *pronkstilleven* ("ostentatious still life"), showing expensive and exotic objects, became more popular. Willem Claeszoon Heda (1595–c. 1680) and Willem Kalf (1619–1693) were leaders in this shift toward the pronkstilleven. In the works of all of the still life painters, colors tended to be muted, with browns dominating, especially in the middle of the century.

Banquet Still Life, by Abraham Van Bereyen, 1660: This work is an example of an ostentatious still life.

Despite the intense realism of individual flowers, paintings were composed from individual studies or even book illustrations, and blooms from very different seasons were routinely included in the same composition . The same flowers also reappear in different works, just as pieces of tableware do. In reality, bouquets of flowers in vases were not at all common in houses at the time; even the very rich tended to display flowers one by one in delftware tulip holders.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Gerard van Honthorst. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerard_van_Honthorst. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Judith Leyster. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Leyster. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Frans_Hals_-_De_officieren_van_de_Sint-Adriaansdoelen.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Officers_of_the_St_Adrian_Militia_Company_in_1633#/media/File:Frans_Hals_-_De_officieren_van_de_Sint-Adriaansdoelen.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1024px-The_Concert_%281627%29_by_Hendrick_ter_Brugghen.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrick_ter_Brugghen#/media/File:The_Concert_(1627)_by_Hendrick_ter_Brugghen.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hendrick ter Brugghen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrick_ter_Brugghen. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Officers of the St Adrian Militia Company in 1633. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Officers_of_the_St_Adrian_Militia_Company_in_1633. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gerard van Honthorst. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerard_van_Honthorst. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hendrick ter Brugghen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrick_ter_Brugghen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Judith Leyster. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Leyster. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frans Hals. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frans_Hals. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mannerism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caravaggisti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravaggisti. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rembrandt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rembrandt. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Rembrandt_van_Rijn_184.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rembrandt#/media/File:Rembrandt_van_Rijn_184.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Rembrandt_Harmensz._van_Rijn_-_Portret_van_een_paar_als_Oud-Testamentische_figuren%2C_genaamd_%27Het_Joodse_bruidje%27_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rembrandt#/media/File:Rembrandt_Harmensz._van_Rijn_-_Portret_van_een_paar_als_Oud-Testamentische_figuren,_genaamd_%27Het_Joodse_bruidje%27_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Rembrandt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rembrandt. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Rembrandt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rembrandt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- variegated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/variegated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chiaroscuro. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chiaroscuro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caravaggisti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravaggisti. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-The_Windmill_at_Wijk_bij_Duurstede_1670_Ruisdael.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_van_Ruisdael#/media/File:The_Windmill_at_Wijk_bij_Duurstede_1670_Ruisdael.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Johannes Vermeer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Vermeer. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- River_Scene_by_Jan_van_Goyen.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_van_Goyen#/media/File:River_Scene_by_Jan_van_Goyen.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jan Dirksz Both. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Dirksz_Both. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Milkmaid (Vermeer). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Milkmaid_(Vermeer). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Genre paintings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre_paintings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dutch Golden Age painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_Golden_Age_painting%23Scenes_of_everyday_life. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dutch Golden Age painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_Golden_Age_painting%23Landscapes_and_cityscapes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- genre. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/genre. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- atmospheric. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/atmospheric. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- atmospheric perspective. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/atmospheric_perspective. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ambrosius Bosschaert. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambrosius_Bosschaert. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Dutch Golden Age painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_Golden_Age_painting%23Still_lifes. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Dutch Golden Age painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_Golden_Age_painting%23Still_lifes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vanitas. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vanitas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pronkstilleven. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pronkstilleven. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 21.5: The Dutch Painters is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

22: South and Southeast Asia After 1200 CE

22.1: India
22.2: Jain Art
22.3: Hindu Art
22.4: Sultanate of Delhi
22.5: Vijayanagar Empire
22.6: The Nayak Dynasty
22.7: The Mughal Period
22.8: India under British Imperialism
22.9: Contemporary Indian Art
22.10: Thai Art
22.11: Burmese Art
22.12: Vietnamese Art
22.13: Indonesian Art

This page titled 22: South and Southeast Asia After 1200 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.1: India

Pre-Iconic Buddhist Art and Architecture

Buddhist Pre-Iconic art originated in India in the 6th century BCE and avoided anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Pre-Iconic Buddhist art and architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Buddhist art flourished in India following the establishment of Buddhism .
- Buddhist art in India has two phases: the Pre-Iconic phase where the Buddha was represented by abstract symbols instead of anthropomorphic figures, and the Iconic phase during which representations of the Buddha in human form developed for the first time.
- Early Buddhist art incorporated specifically Buddhist symbols such as the eight-spoked *dharmachakra*, the wheel of life that symbolized the Buddha's teaching of the path to enlightenment .
- Another characteristic feature of Buddhist architecture was the stupa , a mound-like structure housing the relics of holy men.
- Although India had a long sculptural tradition and a mastery of rich iconography , the Buddha was never represented in human form during this time, but only through symbols such as the wheel, a footprint, an empty seat, or as a character in a jataka tale .

Key Terms

- **anthropomorphic**: Having the form or attributes of a human.
- **stupa**: A dome-shaped Buddhist monument, used to house Buddhist relics.
- **frieze**: Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

Introduction: Buddhism and Buddhist Art

Buddhism is a religion indigenous to the Indian subcontinent that emerged in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. The religion is based on the teachings of the Buddha ("the awakened one"), who according to tradition lived from 563 to 483 BCE; however, scholars hold that he might have lived as much as a century later. As with any figure so intertwined with philosophical or spiritual implications, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate myth and legend from historical fact about the life of the Buddha.

Born to a royal family and originally named Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha left his family and all worldly possessions to live as an ascetic and achieve enlightenment. At the age of 35, Siddhartha became known as the Buddha, the "enlightened one," and began to teach his philosophy of "The Middle Way" (a middle path between the extremes of luxury during the first part of his life and the asceticism of the second part) in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent during the 6th and 5th centuries BCE.

Buddhist art flourished in India following the establishment of the religion, which had a sizeable base of followers. In India, there are two broad phases of Buddhist art: the Pre-Iconic (5th—1st centuries BCE) and Iconic (1st century CE—present) phase. As Buddhism expanded outside of India from the 1st century CE onward, Buddhist art and architecture came into contact with different cultures that were adopting new artistic influences.

Early Buddhist Architecture

Buddhist architecture emerged after the Buddha's death, building on the model of the Brahminist Hindu temple that contained an inner sanctum, a surrounding ambulatory route, and a columned porch. They incorporated specifically Buddhist symbols such as the eight-spoked *dharmachakra*, the wheel of life that symbolized the Buddha's teaching of the path to enlightenment. The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya in the 1st century BCE became a model for similar structures in Burma and Indonesia. Another characteristic feature of Buddhist architecture was the stupa, a mound-like structure housing the relics of holy men. The Great

Stupa at Sanchi is the oldest stone structure of its kind in India and was commissioned by the Maurya emperor Ashoka the Great in the 3rd century BCE. It contains the relics of the Buddha and is decorated with fine examples of Pre-Iconic Buddhist sculpture.

The Great Stupa at Sanchi: The Great Stupa at Sanchi is decorated with fine examples of Pre-Iconic Buddhist sculpture.

Early Buddhist Art

During the 2nd to 1st century BCE, sculptures became more explicit, representing episodes of the Buddha's life and teachings. These took the form of votive tablets or sculptural friezes , usually in relation to the decoration of stupas. Although India had a long sculptural tradition and a mastery of rich iconography, the Buddha was never represented in human form during this time, but only through Buddhist symbolism . The friezes and tablets avoided anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha, even in scenes where other human figures were present.

Because artists were reluctant to depict the Buddha anthropomorphically, they developed sophisticated aniconic symbols to avoid doing so. His presence was indicated through symbols such as the wheel, a footprint, an empty seat, or as a character in a jataka tale. This tendency remained as late as the 2nd century CE in the southern parts of India in the art of the Amaravati School. It has been argued that earlier anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha may have been made of wood and may have perished since then; however, no related archaeological evidence has been found.

Footprint of the Buddha: Footprint of the Buddha. 1st century, Gandhara.

Iconic Buddhist Sculpture and Painting

Buddhist art during the Iconic phase largely evolved as it came into contact with other cultures in Asia.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Iconic phase of Buddhist art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Unlike the Pre-Iconic phase where the Buddha was represented by abstract symbols, the Iconic phase of Buddhist art showed representations of the Buddha in human form for the first time.
- The initial impact of Islam on Buddhist art was generally destructive, as Muslim invaders destroyed many Buddhist monasteries and artifacts . By the end of the 12th century, Buddhism in India remained only in select regions of the country.
- A revival of Buddhism began in 1891, when Anagarika Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi Society with the aim of restoring ancient Buddhist shrines and temples that had been neglected or damaged.
- There are two separate strands of Buddhist art in Asia: the Northern Branch, which encompasses Central Asia, China, Japan, and Korea where Mahayana Buddhism is practiced; and the Southern Branch, which encompasses Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia where Theravada Buddhism is practiced.

Key Terms

- **Anthropomorphic**: Having the form or attributes of a human.

From Pre-Iconic to Iconic

Anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha began to emerge in the 1st century CE in Northern India. During this new Iconic phase, representations of the Buddha in human form developed for the first time, following centuries of Pre-Iconic art in which the Buddha was represented by abstract symbols.

The two main centers of creation have been identified as Gandhara, in today's North West Frontier Province in Pakistan, and the region of Mathura in central northern India. The art of Gandhara had benefited from centuries of interaction with Greek culture by this time, following the conquests of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. This led to the development of Greco-Buddhist art, a specific form characterized by wavy hair, detailed flowing drapery, and shoes or sandals. The Buddhist art of Mathura, in contrast , was based on native Indian traditions. The two styles were characterized by a high degree of realism and strongly influenced each other.

Gandhara Buddha: Representation of the Buddha in the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, 1st century CE. This showcases the wavy hair and detailed flowing drapery typical of the style.

Buddhist art continued to develop in India through the 4th and 6th centuries CE. The pink sandstone sculptures of the Gupta period were particularly influential in Southeast Asia, and it was during this empire that the "ideal form" of the Buddha appeared, becoming the model for future generations.

By the 10th century, the creation of new Buddhist art in India was waning, and by the 12th century it had largely disappeared due to the expansion of Islam. The initial impact of Islam on Buddhist art was generally destructive, as Muslim invaders destroyed many Buddhist monasteries and artifacts. By the end of the 12th century, Buddhism in India remained only in select regions of the country. It continued, however, to expand through the Himalayan kingdoms and in East and Southeast Asia. A revival of Buddhism began in 1891, when Anagarika Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi Society with the aim of restoring ancient Buddhist shrines and temples that had been neglected or damaged.

Expansion of Different Styles

As Buddhism expanded outside of India from the 1st century CE onward, Buddhist art and architecture came into contact with different cultures that were adopting new artistic influences. Central and Eastern Asia practiced Mahayana Buddhism, which formed the Northern branch of Buddhist art. Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka practiced Theravada Buddhism, which formed the Southern branch of Buddhist art.

Northern Buddhist Art

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism to Central Asia, China, and ultimately Japan and Korea started in the 1st century CE, where the Mahayana branch of Buddhism was developed and practiced. Buddhist art persisted for several centuries in Bactria (modern Afghanistan) and Central Asia until the advent of Islam in the 7th century CE. The art, along with the religion, spread

from eastern Central Asia to China, which favored solemn and abstract representations of the Buddha under the Northern Dynasties of the 5th and 6th centuries and more lifelike, classically Indian depictions under the Tang Dynasty until 845.

Buddhism was introduced in Japan in the 6th century and adopted by the state in the 7th. Numerous temples and monasteries were built in Japan, and countless sculptures and paintings were made under governmental sponsorship. Japan also developed an extremely rich figurative art for the pantheon of Buddhist deities .

Southern Buddhist Art

Buddhism traveled to Southeast Asia through maritime trade routes in the Indian Ocean. The Pali and Sanskrit languages and the Indian script, together with Mahayana Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism , were transmitted from direct contact, through sacred texts, and through Indian literature such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Theravada Buddhism was transmitted to Burma, Siam (Thailand), lower Cambodia, Southern Vietnam, and Indonesia. This largely influenced the direction Buddhist art would take in Southeast Asia.

Several very powerful empires formed in Southeast Asia between the 9th and 13th centuries. These powers, including the Sri Vijaya Empire based in Sumatra, the Khmer Empire in Cambodia, and the ethnic Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, were very active in Buddhist architectural and artistic creation. The construction of vast Buddhist temple complexes played a particularly important role.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Sanchi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchi. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/73/Buddha-Footprint.jpeg/344px-Buddha-Footprint.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Decline of Buddhism in India. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Decline_of_Buddhism_in_India. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- stupa. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stupa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- anthropomorphic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/anthropomorphic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- frieze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/frieze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/Buddha_and_Buddhism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- -gandhara-buddha-28tnm-29.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b8/Gandhara_Buddha_(tnm).jpeg/361px-Gandhara_Buddha_(tnm).jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buddhist Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.1: India is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.2: Jain Art

Jain Architecture

Jainism has played an important influence on the development of architectural styles in India.

Learning Objectives

Describe the popular themes and characteristics of Jain architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Jainism is a transtheistic religion prescribing non-violence toward all living beings; it originated in the Indian subcontinent in the 6th century BCE.
- Jainism has influenced and contributed to many artistic spheres in India, such as painting, sculpture, and architecture.
- Modern and medievial Jains built many temples, especially in western India. The earliest Jain monuments were temples based on the Brahmanical Hindu temple plan and monasteries for Jain monks.
- Among the earliest Jain monuments are the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves in Orissa, carved out as residential blocks for Jain monks during the reign of King Kharavela of Kalinga (193–170 BCE).
- Built under Chalukya rule in Rajasthan between the 11th and 13th centuries CE, the Dilwara Temple complex consists of five ornately carved marble temples, each dedicated to a different Tirthankara .

Key Terms

- **iconography**: The branch of art history that studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images.
- **Tirthankara**: A Jain term for a person who achieves enlightenment through asceticism and who then becomes a role model teacher for those seeking spiritual guidance.

Jainism

Jainism is a transtheistic religion prescribing non-violence toward all living beings. It originated in the Indian subcontinent in the 6th century BCE. Its founder Mahavira (c. 540–468 BCE) was born into a royal family but renounced worldly life to become an ascetic and establish the central tenets of Jainism.

Jainism found favor with the merchant classes and also with several powerful rulers. Chandragupta Maurya (born c. 340 BCE, ruled c. 320–298 BCE), the founder of the great Maurya Empire, had succeeded in conquering almost the entire Indian subcontinent; however he abdicated his throne at the age of 42 to become a Jain monk. Samprati, also an emperor of the Maurya dynasty and the grandson of Ashoka the Great (304–232 BCE) also became a Jain. Both Chandragupta and Samprati were responsible for spreading Jainism in southern and eastern India.

Jain Architecture

Modern and medieval Jains built many temples, especially in western India. The earliest Jain monuments were temples based on the Brahmanical Hindu temple plan and monasteries for Jain monks. For the most part, artists in ancient India belonged to non-denominational guilds who were prepared to lend their services to any patron , whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain. Many of the styles they used were a function of the time and place rather than the particular religion. Therefore, Jain art from this period is stylistically similar to Hindu or Buddhist art, although its themes and iconography are specifically Jain. With some minor variations, the western style of Indian art endured throughout the 16th century and into the 17th century. The rise in Islam contributed to the decline of Jain art but did not result in its total elimination.

Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves

Among the earliest Jain monuments are the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves, located near the city of Bhubaneshwar in Orissa, India. These caves are partly natural and partly manmade and were carved out as residential blocks for Jain monks during the reign

of King Kharavela of Kalinga (193–170 BCE). The caves bear inscriptions and sculptural friezes depicting Tirthankaras, elephants, women, and geese.

The Dilwara Temples

Built under Chalukya rule in Rajasthan between the 11th and 13th centuries CE, the Dilwara Temple complex consists of five ornately carved marble temples, each dedicated to a different Tirthankara. The largest temple in the complex, the Vimal Vasahi Temple, was built in 1021 and is dedicated to the Tirthankara Rishabha. Among its most remarkable features are the *rang manda*, a grand hall supported by 12 pillars and surmounted by a breathtaking central dome , and the *navchowki*, a collection of nine rectangular ceilings, also richly carved. The pillars in the main hall are carved into the likenesses of women playing musical instruments and the 16 *vidyadevis*, or goddesses of knowledge; each holds a symbol representing her individual branch of learning.

Domed ceiling detail: This image shows the interior of a richly carved marble dome in the Dilwara Temple complex representing Jain Tirthankaras.

Jain Sculpture

Jain sculpture is characterized most often by nude representations of saviors or deities in meditative postures.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the motifs underlying Jain sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Jain art is stylistically similar to Hindu or Buddhist art, although its themes and iconography are specifically Jain.
- Common themes in Jain painting and sculpture are the *Tirthankaras*, or saviors; the *yakshas* and *yakshinis*, or supernatural guardian deities, and symbols such as the lotus and the swastika, which represent peace and well-being.
- Ayagapata is a type of votive slab or tablet associated with worship in Jainism; the slabs are decorated with objects and designs central to Jain worship such as the stupa , dharmacakra, and triratna.
- The colossal monolithic statue of Bahubali, carved in 981 CE out of a single block of granite and standing 57 feet high, is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Jain worshipers.

Key Terms

- **Tirthankara**: A Jain term for a person who achieves enlightenment through asceticism and who then becomes a role model teacher for those seeking spiritual guidance.

- **iconography**: The branch of art history that studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images.

Themes within Jain Sculpture

The Two Jain Tirthankaras, British Museum: This sculpture represents two Tirthankaras, or founders of Jainism. On the left is Rishabha, who was the first of the 24 tirthankaras. On the right is Mahavira, the last of those 24, who consolidated and reformed the religious and philosophical system.

For the most part, artists in ancient India belonged to non-denominational guilds who were prepared to lend their services to any patron , whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain. Many of the styles they used were a function of the time and place rather than the particular religion. Therefore, Jain art from this period is stylistically similar to Hindu or Buddhist art, although its themes and iconography are specifically Jain. With some minor variations, the western style of Indian art endured throughout the 16th century and into the 17th century. The rise in Islam contributed to the decline of Jain art but did not result in its total elimination.

Jain iconography mostly has a sage in sitting or standing meditative posture without any clothes. Popular themes and icons in Jain art include the *Tirthankaras* (Jain saviors, or human beings who achieved the ultimate spiritual salvation and served as role models for society), *yakshas* and *yakshinis* (supernatural male and female guardian deities), and holy symbols such as the lotus and the swastika, which symbolized peace and well-being.

Figures on various seals from the Indus Valley Civilization are similar to Jain images: nude and in a meditative posture. The earliest known Jain image is in the Patna museum, dated approximately to the 3rd century BCE. Bronze images of the 23rd Tirthankara, Pārśva, can be seen in the Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai, and in the Patna museum; these are dated to the 2nd century BCE. A sandalwood sculpture of Mahāvīra was carved during his lifetime, according to tradition. Later the practice of making images of wood was abandoned, with other materials being substituted.

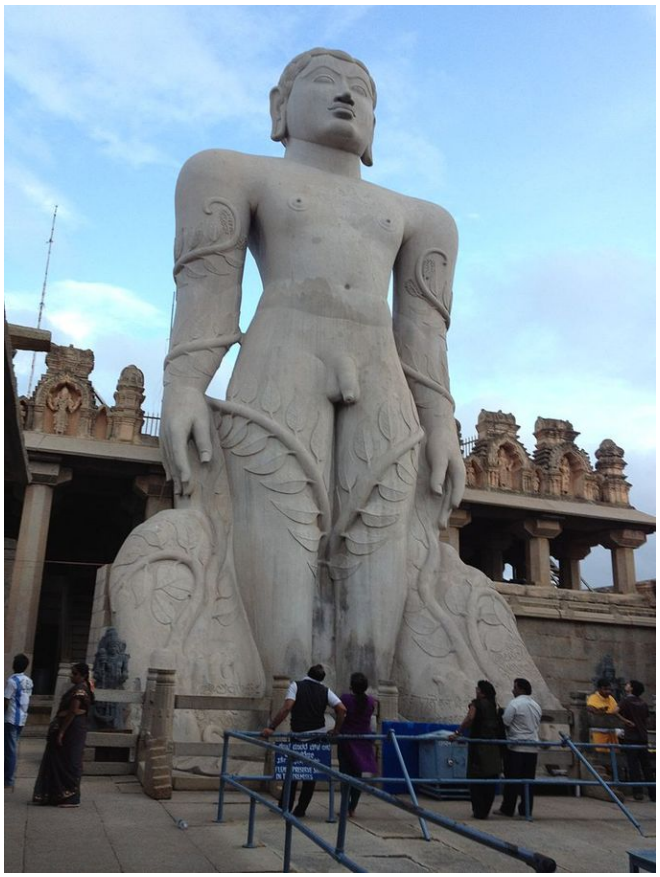
Ayagapata

Ayagapata is a type of votive slab or tablet associated with worship in Jainism. Many of these stone tablets, some dating back to the 1st century CE, were discovered during excavations at ancient Jain sites such as Kankali Tila near Mathura , India. These slabs are decorated with objects and designs central to Jain worship such as the stupa, dharmacakra, and triratna, and were often used as offerings or for worship.

The Statue of Bahubali

A colossal monolithic statue of Bahubali at Shravanbelagola, the Jain siddha (one who has attained spiritual salvation), is located in Karnataka in southern India. This statue is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Jain worshipers. The statue was carved in

981 CE out of a single block of granite; it stands 57 feet high and is completely nude, as is customary in the Jain tradition.



The statue of Gommateshwara Bahubali: The 57 foot high Gommateshwara statue at Shravanabelagola, Karnataka, was built in 981 CE.

Jain Illustrated Manuscripts

Jain illustrated manuscripts, originally painted on palm leaf, were characterized by sharp outlines and depictions of Jain saviors.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the characteristics of illustrated manuscripts produced by the Jain

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Jain illustrated manuscripts were painted on palm leaf and relied on sharp outlines for effect, becoming progressively more angular and wiry until barely a trace of naturalism was left.
- The figures are shown in profile, as the full-face view was reserved for the Jain Tirthankaras . Only a few colors are used, including yellow, green, blue, black, and red.
- Common themes in Jain painting and sculpture are the *Tirthankaras*, or saviors; the *yakshas* and *yakshinis*, or supernatural guardian deities, and symbols such as the lotus and the swastika, which represent peace and well-being.
- The earliest illustrations were simple icons in small panels, but they gradually became more elaborate, depicting scenes from the lives of various Tirthankaras in detail.
- From the 14th century onward, the increased availability of paper allowed the production of larger and more elaborate Jain illustrated manuscripts.

Key Terms

- **Tirthankara**: A Jain term for a person who achieves enlightenment through asceticism and who then becomes a role model teacher for those seeking spiritual guidance.
- **palm leaf**: A material used for writing and the creation of manuscripts in South Asia and Southeast Asia dating back to the 5th century BCE, and possibly much earlier.

Illustrated Manuscripts in the Jain Tradition

A large number of illustrated manuscripts commissioned by members of the Jain community have survived from between the 1oth and 14th centuries, representing the Western Indian style of art. Painted on palm leaf, these illustrations relied on sharp outlines for effect, becoming progressively more angular and wiry until barely a trace of naturalism is left. The figures are shown in profile, as the full-face view was reserved for the Jain *Tirthankaras*. A common feature of this style is the projection of an eye beyond the face shown in profile, meant to indicate the second eye, which would not be visible in this position. Only a few colors are used, including yellow, green, blue, black, and red. The earliest illustrations were simple icons in small panels, but they gradually became more elaborate, depicting scenes from the lives of various Tirthankaras in detail.

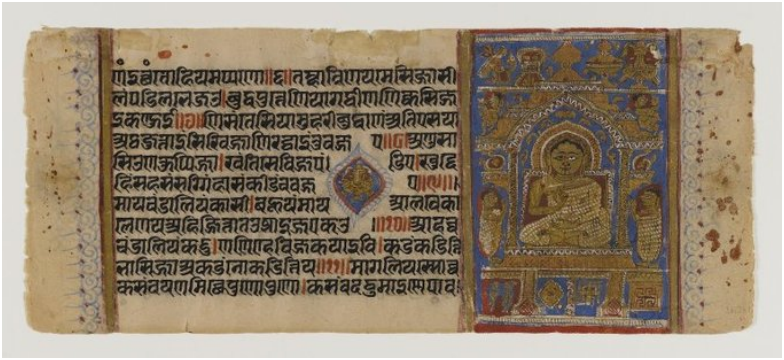
Common themes in Jain painting and illustrated manuscript, similar to other forms of Jain art, include the *Tirthankaras* (Jain saviors, or human beings who achieved the ultimate spiritual salvation and served as role models for society), *yakshas* and *yakshinis* (supernatural male and female guardian deities), and holy symbols such as the lotus and the swastika, which symbolized peace and well-being.

The Tirthankaras

Most of the Jain paintings and illustrations depict historical events, known as *Panch Kalyanaka*, from the life of the Tirthankaras. Rishabha, the first Tirthankara, is usually depicted in either the lotus position or *kayotsarga*, the standing position. He is distinguished from other Tirthankara by the long locks of hair falling to his shoulders. Incidents of his life, such as his marriage and Indra marking his forehead, are often depicted in paintings; other paintings show him presenting a pottery bowl to his followers, painting a house, weaving, and being visited by his mother Marudevi. Each of the 24 Tirthankara is associated with distinctive emblems, which are listed in texts such as Tiloyapannati, Kahavaali, and Pravacanasaarodhara.

Advances Over Time

The increased availability of paper from the late 14th century enabled artists to paint more elaborate illustrations. A 15th century manuscript of Kalpasutra, a Jain text containing the biographies of the Tirthankaras, is particularly opulent. The text is written in gold and the margins are illuminated with figural patterns. Paintings in lavish blue, gold, and red, testifying to the wealth of the patron , often take up an entire page.



Jain Kalpasutra manuscript: This illustration is from a Jain Kalpasutra manuscript, 1470—1500 CE. It uses opaque watercolor and gold on paper.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/3d/LDDilwaraCeiling.jpg/543px-LDDilwaraCeiling.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Jainism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jainism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tirthankara. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Tirthankara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 220px-tirthankaras.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tirthankaras.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-The_statue_of_Gommateshvara_Bahubali_dating_978-993_AD..jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahubali#/media/File:The_statue_of_Gommateshvara_Bahubali_dating_978-993_AD..jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jainism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jain Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jain_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- jain-kalpasutra-manuscript.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/8/82/Brooklyn_Museum_-_Illustration_from_a_Jain_Kalpasutra_Manuscript.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jainism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts of the Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jain Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jain_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.2: Jain Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.3: Hindu Art

Architecture of Hindu Temples

Hindu architecture, representing a plurality of beliefs, is commonly divided into the northern Nagara and southern Dravidian styles.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the northen Nagara and southern Dravidian styles of Hindu temple architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hindu art represents a plurality of beliefs and has deeply influenced the painting, sculpture, and architecture of the Indian subcontinent. Architecture and sculpture are inextricably linked in Hindu temples, which are usually devoted to a number of different deities .
- A Hindu temple generally consists of an inner sanctum, in which the idol of the deity is housed; a congregation hall; and sometimes an antechamber and porch.
- Two main styles of temples exist in India: the north Indian *Nagara* style, characterized by a beehive shaped central tower, and the south Indian *Dravidia* style, characterized by a graduated tower with multiple layered pavilions.
- The period between the 6th and 12th centuries was marked by the appearance of a large number of Hindu states and was a productive and creative period for Hindu temple architecture.

Key Terms

- **shikhara**: The tower surmounting a Hindu temple.
- **om**: A sacred, mystical syllable used to invoke God in Hindu prayer and meditation.

Introduction: Hinduism and Hindu Art

Hinduism is the predominant religion of the Indian subcontinent. Dating back to the Iron Age , it is often called the oldest living religion in the world. Hinduism has no single founder and is a conglomeration of diverse traditions and philosophies rather than a rigid set of beliefs. Most Hindus believe in a single supreme God who appears in many different manifestations as *devas* (celestial beings or deities), and they may worship specific devas as individual facets of the same God.

Hindu art reflects this plurality of beliefs, and Hindu temples, in which architecture and sculpture are inextricably connected, are usually devoted to different deities. Deities commonly worshiped include Shiva the Destroyer; Vishnu in his incarnations as Rama and Krishna; Ganesha, the elephant god of prosperity; and different forms of the goddess Shakti (literally meaning “power”), the primordial feminine creative principle. These deities are often portrayed with multiple limbs and heads, demonstrating the extent of the god’s power and ability. Hindu art is also characterized by a number of recurring holy symbols, including the *om* , an invocation of the divine consciousness of God; the swastika, a symbol of auspiciousness; and the lotus flower, a symbol of purity, beauty, fertility, and transcendence.

Hindu Temples

A Hindu temple generally consists of a *garba griha* (“womb chamber”), the inner sanctum in which the *murti* , or idol of the deity, is housed; a congregation hall; and sometimes an antechamber and porch. The *garba griha* is surmounted by a *shikhara* , or tower. Two main styles of temples exist in India: the northern Nagara style and the southern Dravida style.

The Nagara Style

In the northern Nagara style, the *shikhara* takes the shape of a curvilinear beehive. The temple is a square with a number of graduated projections in the middle of each side, giving a cruciform shape with a number of re-entrant angles on each side. The projections in the plan are also carried upwards to the top of the *shikhara*, giving a strong emphasis on vertical lines in elevation .

Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneshwar, Orissa: The 11th century Lingaraj Temple is a fine example of the north Indian Nagara style of temple architecture, marked by its curvilinear, beehive-shaped shikhara.

The Dravidian Style

In the southern Dravidian style, the tower or *gopuram* consists of progressive smaller stories of pavilions. These temples were square in plan and pyramidal in shape; included porches (*mandapams)* and pillard halls (*chaultris or chawadis);* and contained tanks or wells for water to be used for sacred purposes or the convenience of the priests.

Brihadeeswarar Temple Gopuram Detail: The Brihadeeswarar Temple in Tanjore has the tallest Dravida style tower (216 feet) in India. The multiple stories are ornately carved.

History and Well-Known Temples

The earliest Hindu temples found in India date back to the Gupta period (ca. 320–550 CE); one of these is the Dashavatara Vishnu Temple in Deogarh in central India, built ca. 500 CE. The period between the 6th and 12th centuries was marked by the appearance of a large number of states, most of which were ruled by Hindu dynasties . This was a deeply productive and creative period for Hindu temple architecture, and many beautiful examples survive to the present day. Some surviving works include the monumental , rock-cut Kailashnath Temple (754–774 CE) dedicated to Shiva at Ellora in the western state of Maharashtra; the 11th century Brihadeeswarar Temple in Tanjore in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, which is India's largest temple; and the Sun Temple (1238–1250 CE) at Konarak in Orissa. Although many Hindu temples were destroyed during the period of Muslim rule in India (12th to 18th centuries), Hindu influence on Indian art and architecture has withstood the test of time and continues to shape works of art.

Hindu Sculpture

Hindu sculpture represents the themes of its religion through its depiction of deities and recurring symbols, such as the lotus flower.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the religious themes that contribute to an understanding of Hindu sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Most Hindus believe in a single supreme God who appears in many different manifestations as *devas*, or celestial beings or deities ; Hindu sculpture reflects this plurality of beliefs.
- Because religion and culture are inseparable with Hinduism , recurring symbols such as the gods and their reincarnations, the lotus flower, and extra limbs make their appearances in many sculptures of Hindu origin.
- Deities are often portrayed with multiple limbs and heads, demonstrating the extent of the God's power and ability.
- Hindu sculpture is characterized by recurring holy symbols such as the *om* , an invocation of the divine consciousness of God; the swastika, a symbol of auspiciousness; and the lotus flower, a symbol of purity, beauty, fertility, and transcendence.
- Sculpture is inextricably linked with architecture in Hindu temples, which are usually devoted to a number of different deities.

Key Terms

- **Hinduism**: A religion or a way of life found most notably in India and Nepal; with over one billion followers, it is the world's third largest religion by population.
- **dharma**: A key concept with multiple meanings in the Indian religions Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism; in Hinduism, it signifies behaviors that are considered to be in accord with the order that makes life and universe possible, including duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues, and "right way of living."

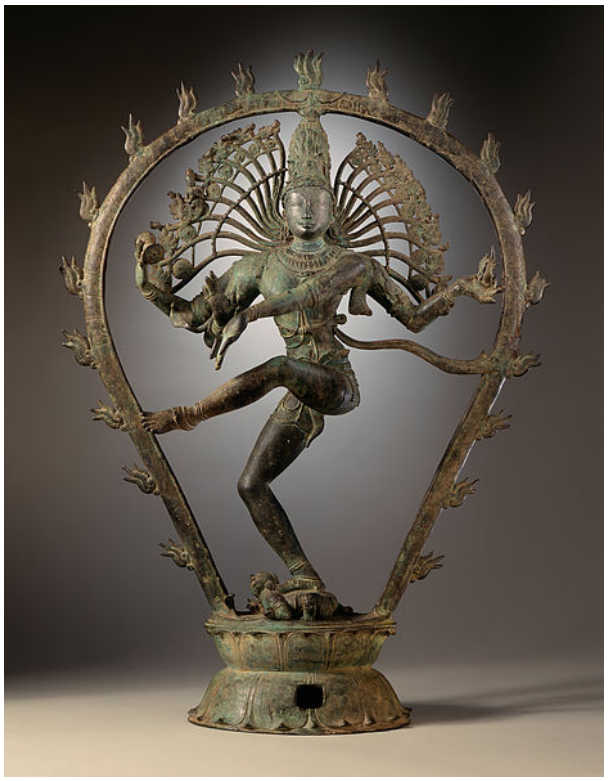
Themes of Hindu Art and Sculpture

Hinduism is a conglomeration of diverse traditions and philosophies rather than a rigid set of beliefs. Most Hindus believe in a single supreme God who appears in many different manifestations as *devas* (celestial beings or deities), and they may worship specific devas as individual facets of the same God. Hindu sculpture, as seen in other forms of Hindu art, reflects this plurality of beliefs. Because religion and culture are inseparable with Hinduism, recurring symbols such as the gods and their reincarnations, the lotus flower, extra limbs, and even the traditional arts make their appearances in many sculptures of Hindu origin.

Depictions of Deities

Deities commonly worshiped and portrayed through sculpture include Shiva the Destroyer; Vishnu in his incarnations as Rama and Krishna; Ganesha, the elephant god of prosperity; and different forms of the goddess Shakti (literally meaning "power"), the primordial feminine creative principle. These deities are often portrayed with multiple limbs and heads, demonstrating the extent of the god's power and ability. For example, the goddess Sarasvati is always depicted with a minimum of four arms: two of the arms will be playing a vina, representing the tuning of her knowledge; her other two hands often hold prayer beads and a scripture, both

of which represent her devotion to her spirituality. As the goddess of learning and art, she is depicted in this way as very capable and powerful in her area of expertise.



Shiva Nataraja, the Lord of the Dance: Nataraja from Tamil Nadu, India. Chola dynasty copper alloy sculpture, ca. 950–1000 CE. The deity is depicted as having multiple arms, as is common for idols of Hindu gods.

Symbols in Hindu Sculpture

Hindu sculpture is also characterized by a number of recurring holy symbols, including the *om*, an invocation of the divine consciousness of God; the swastika, a symbol of auspiciousness; and the lotus flower, a symbol of purity, beauty, prosperity, fertility, and transcendence. The lotus flower is associated with these attributes due to its own process of blossoming: the flower grows out of mud and rests atop the water in which it grows, illustrating the hardship it must endure in order to achieve maximum beauty. Many deities have their name based on the Sanskrit word for lotus, such as *Lakshimi*. In addition to these symbols, flowers, birds, animals, instruments, symmetric mandala drawings, objects, and idols are all part of symbolic iconography in Hinduism.

Connection to Architecture

Sculpture is inextricably linked with architecture in Hindu temples, which are usually devoted to a number of different deities. The Hindu temple style reflects a synthesis of arts, the ideals of dharma , beliefs, values , and the way of life cherished under Hinduism. Elaborately ornamented with sculpture throughout, these temples are a network of art, pillars with carvings, and statues that display and celebrate the four important and necessary principles of human life under Hinduism—the pursuit of *artha* (prosperity, wealth), the pursuit of *kama* (pleasure, sex), the pursuit of *dharma* (virtues, ethical life), and the pursuit of *moksha* (release, self-knowledge).

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/2d/Lingaraj_temple_Bhubaneswar_11004.jpg/318px-Lingaraj_temple_Bhubaneswar_11004.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/04/Brihadeeswarar_temple_gopuram.jpg/400px-

Brihadeeswarar_temple_gopuram.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- The Gupta Empire: An Indian Golden Age. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/History-2-2-2-Harlem-Renaissance.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Hindu temple architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hinduism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Konark Sun Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Konark_Sun_Temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kailashnath Temple, Ellora. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kailashnath_Temple,_Ellora. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vishnu Temple, Deogarh. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishnu_Temple,_Deogarh. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Brihadeeswarar Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Brihadeeswarar_Temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu temple architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple_architecture%23Nagara_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dravidian architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dravidian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hinduism/Religious Symbols of Hinduism. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Hinduism/Religious_Symbols_of_Hinduism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/shikhara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- om. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/om. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- e-lord-of-dance-lacma-edit.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/bf/Shiva_as_the_Lord_of_Dance_LACMA_edit.jpg/467px-Shiva_as_the_Lord_of_Dance_LACMA_edit.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hindu Temple Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_temple_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hinduism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.3: Hindu Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.4: Sultanate of Delhi

Architecture under the Sultanate of Delhi

Indo-Islamic architecture emerged in India under the Delhi Sultanate during the 13th to 16th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Islamic architecture patronized by the Delhi Sultanate

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Delhi Sultanate refers to the five short-lived Muslim kingdoms of Turkic and Pashtun (Afghan) origin that ruled the territory of Delhi between 1206 and 1526 CE.
- The early rulers of the Delhi Sultanate are often viewed as iconoclastic pillagers, best known for their indiscriminate destruction of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples and enacting prohibitions of anthropomorphic representations in art.
- The Delhi Sultanate's greatest contribution to Indian fine arts , however, was the introduction of Islamic architectural features, including true domes and arches , and the integration of Indian and Islamic styles of architecture.
- Built by the first sultan of Delhi, the Qutb Minar is the tallest minaret in India, the walls of which are covered with Indian floral motifs and verses from the Quran.
- The Alai Darwaza is the main gateway on the southern side of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in the Qutb complex; built in 1311 CE, it features the earliest surviving true dome in India.
- There is little architecture remaining from the Sayyid and Lodi periods, but a few fine examples survive in the Lodi Gardens in Delhi, including the tomb of Mohammad Shah, the last sultan of the Sayyid Dynasty , built in 1444.

Key Terms

- **corbel**: A structural member jutting out of a wall to carry a superincumbent weight.
- **iconoclastic**: Characterized by attack on established beliefs or institutions.
- **anthropomorphic**: Having the form or attributes of a human.

The Delhi Sultanate

The Delhi Sultanate refers to the five short-lived Muslim kingdoms of Turkic and Pashtun (Afghan) origin that ruled the territory of Delhi between 1206 and 1526 CE. In the 16th century, the last of their line was overthrown by the Mughals, who established the the Mughal Empire in India.

The five dynasties included:

- the Mamluk Dynasty (1206–1290)
- the Khilji Dynasty (1290–1320)
- the Tughlaq Dynasty (1320–1414)
- the Sayyid Dynasty (1414–1451)
- the Afghan Lodi Dynasty (1451–1526)

Architecture under the Delhi Sultanate

The early rulers of the Delhi Sultanate are often viewed as iconoclastic pillagers, best known for their indiscriminate destruction of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples. They enacted Islamic prohibitions of anthropomorphic representations in art, which had been common at the time. However, the fusion of indigenous and Muslim customs and styles under the Delhi Sultanate gave rise to the beginnings of Indo-Islamic art and architecture, which reached its zenith in later years under the Mughal emperors. The Sultanate's greatest contribution to the fine arts of India lies in their advances in architecture.

The Qutb Minar

Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the governor of Delhi and, subsequently, the first sultan of the Delhi Sultanate (ruling from 1206–1210 CE), started the construction of the Qutb Minar in 1192, which was completed after his death by his successor Iltutmish. Made of fluted red sandstone and marble, the Qutb Minar is the tallest minaret in India, standing at a height of 238 feet. It comprises several superposed flanged and cylindrical shafts , separated by balconies supported by Muqarnas corbels (an architectural ornamentation reminiscent of stalactites employed in traditional Islamic and Persian architecture). The walls of the minaret are covered with Indian floral motifs and verses from the Quran.

The Qutb Minar and the Alai Darwaza: One of the earliest and best known of the Delhi Sultanate architectural monuments, and also the tallest minaret in India. Its accompanying gateway, the Alai Darwaza, bears the first surviving true dome in India.

The Qutb Minar is located in Mehrauli Archeological Park, which also contains other fine examples of Delhi Sultanate architecture, including the tomb of the sultan Balban (who reigned from 1266–1287 CE), the first known building in India to feature a true arch. Another building of historical importance in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture is the Alai Darwaza, the main gateway on the southern side of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in the Qutb complex. Built in 1311 CE by the second Khilji sultan of Delhi, Ala-ud-din Khilji, it features the earliest surviving true dome in India.

The Tomb of Mohammad Shah

There is little architecture remaining from the Sayyid and Lodi periods, but a few fine examples survive in the Lodi Gardens in Delhi, including the tomb of Mohammad Shah, the last sultan of the Sayyid Dynasty, built in 1444. It is characterized by an octagonal main chamber with Islamic pointed arches, stone *chhajjas* (projecting eaves supported by carved brackets borrowed by Muslim empires from Hindu architecture), and *guldastas* (ornamental flower-shaped pinnacles) on the roof, both of which would eventually become common features of Mughal architecture.

Painting under the Sultanate of Delhi

The paintings of the Delhi Sultanate represent a period of inventiveness and the development of an influential Indo-Persian style of art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the Indo-Persian style of painting supported by the Delhi Sultanate

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Despite Islamic injunctions against anthropomorphic figures in art, the Delhi Sultanate patronized a vast cannon of painting and artistic work.
- The Delhi Sultanate developed an Indo-Persian style of painting that drew heavily from schools in Iran and Jain paintings.
- Features of Delhi Sultanate paintings that are based on Indian traditions include groups of people standing in rows and identical poses, narrow bands of decoration running across the width of the painting, and bright and unusual colors.
- The paintings of the Delhi Sultanate represent a period of inventiveness that set the stage for the development of the Mughal and Rajput schools of art, which thrived from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

Key Terms

- **iconoclastic**: Characterized by attack on established beliefs or institutions.
- **Jain**: An ancient Indian religion belonging to the śramaṇa tradition and prescribing ahimsa (non-violence) toward all living beings to the most possible extent.
- **anthropomorphic**: Having the form or attributes of a human.
- **Timurid**: A dynasty of Turco-Mongol lineage descended from Timur, a 14th century conqueror who established empires in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

Overview: Painting Under the Delhi Sultanate

The early rulers of the Delhi Sultanate are often viewed as iconoclastic pillagers, best known for their indiscriminate destruction of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples. They enacted prohibitions of anthropomorphic representations in art, which had been common at the time. Scholars previously believed that the Delhi Sultanate did not patronize painting because of this Islamic injunction against the portrayal of living beings in art; however, literary evidence and the discovery of illustrated manuscripts from the period suggests otherwise. Indeed, royal painting workshops appear to have flourished under more liberal rulers.

Painting Style

The painting style of the Delhi Sultanate borrowed heavily from the flourishing traditions of Islamic painting abroad, resulting in the development of an Indo-Persian style. This style was based essentially on the schools of Iran but influenced by the individual tastes of Indian rulers and local styles, including Jain styles of painting. It is now believed that numerous painters and architects were invited from foreign countries, and illustrated manuscripts, handily transported, must have been easily available.

Features of Delhi Sultanate paintings that are based on Indian traditions include groups of people standing in rows and identical poses, narrow bands of decoration running across the width of the painting, and bright and unusual colors that replace the muted hues found in earlier Timurid paintings.

History and Notable Works

The earliest known examples date from the 15th century, including a copy of the *Shahnama*, or Book of Kings, created under Lodi rule. This work of art bears a close relationship to contemporary Jain paintings. Other notable works include the *Khamseh* (“Quintet”) of Amir Khosrow of Delhi, a Bostan painted in Mandu, and a manuscript of the Ne’mat-nameh painted for a sultan of Malwa in the opening years of the 16th century. The illustrations of the Ne’mat-nameh manuscript are derived from the Turkmen style of Shiraz but show clear Indian features adapted from the local version of the western Indian style.

Though the western Indian style was essentially conservative, it was not unfailingly so. It began to show signs of change over the years, most notably in two manuscripts from Mandu, a Kalpa-sutra and a Kalakacaryakatha of about 1439, and a Kalpa-sutra painted at Jaunpur in 1465. These works were done in the opulent manner of the 15th century, but for the first time the quality of the line is different, and the uncompromisingly abstract expression begins to make way for a more human and emotional mood.

By the opening years of the 16th century, a new and vigorous style had come into being. Although derived from the western Indian style, it is clearly independent, full of the most vital energy, deeply felt, and profoundly moving. The earliest dated example is an Aranyaka Parva of the Mahabharata (1516), and among the finest are series illustrating the Bhagavata-Purana and the Caurapañcashika of Bilhana. A technically more refined variant of this style, preferring a fine line, meticulous ornamentation, and the pale, cool colors of Persian derivation, existed contemporaneously and is best illustrated by a manuscript of the ballad

Candamyana by Mulla Daud (c. first half of the 16th century). The early 16th century thus appears to have been a period of inventiveness and set the stage for the development of the Mughal and Rajput schools, which thrived from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

Rustam Kills the Turanian Hero Alkus with his Lance: Shahnama, Delhi Sultanate, c. 1450. This miniature comes from a manuscript made by an artist who was highly influenced by Jain art from western India. Both the intense palette and the depiction of figures differ from those found in other Islamic painting.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d9/Qutab_Minar_mausoleum.jpg/519px-Qutab_Minar_mausoleum.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Delhi sultanate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Delhi_sultanate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_conquest_in_the_Indian_subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art and Architecture of the Delhi Sultanate (1206u20131572). **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/ARTH303-DelhiSultanate-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- anthropomorphic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/anthropomorphic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconoclastic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconoclastic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- corbel. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/corbel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- -hero-alkus-with-his-lance.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rustam_Kills_the_Turanian_Hero_Alkus_with_his_Lance.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Delhi Sultanate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Delhi_sultanate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts of the Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Delhi Sultanate. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/ARTH303-DelhiSultanate-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 22.4: Sultanate of Delhi is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.5: Vijayanagar Empire

Architecture in the Vijayanagar Empire

The Vijayanagar Empire ruled in South India from 1336 until 1646 and left a lasting legacy of architecture, sculpture, and painting.

Learning Objectives

Describe the key features of religious, courtly, and civic architecture of the Vijayanagar Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Vijayanagar architecture is a vibrant combination of the Chalukya, Hoysala, Pandya, and Chola styles , which evolved from prior empires in earlier centuries. It is also influenced by later Deccan and Dravidian styles.
- Preferred for its durability, local hard granite was the building material of choice, as it had been for the Badami Chalukyas.
- Vijayanagar temples are characterized by ornate pillared halls and *rayagopurams*, or monumental towers adorned with life-sized figures of gods and goddesses that stand at the entrance of the temple.
- The courtly architecture of Vijayanagar is generally made of mortar mixed with stone rubble and often shows secular styles with Islamic-influenced arches , domes , and vaults .

Key Terms

- **balustrade**: A row of balusters topped by a rail, serving as an open parapet, as along the edge of a balcony, terrace, bridge, staircase, or the eaves of a building.
- **monolithic**: Formed of a single massive rock or stone.

Background: The Vijayanagar Empire

The Vijayanagar Empire was a Hindu empire based in the Deccan plateau region of South India. Established in 1336 by Harihara I (who ruled from 1336–1356 CE), it enjoyed its greatest political and cultural prominence under Emperor Krishna Deva Raya (who ruled from 1509–1529 CE) and lasted until 1646, when it was conquered by the Muslim Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda.

The empire's patronage enabled its fine arts and literature to rise to new heights, and its legacy of sculpture, painting, and architecture influenced the development of the arts in South India long after the empire came to an end. There were great innovations in Hindu temple construction during this period, and many diverse temple building traditions and styles in South India came together in the Vijayanagar style of architecture, the finest examples of which are to be found in the capital Hampi.

Vijayanagar Architecture

Vijayanagar era architecture can be broadly classified into religious, courtly, and civic architecture. Its style is a harmonious combination of the Chalukya, Hoysala, Pandya, and Chola styles that evolved in earlier centuries and represents a return to the simplicity and serenity of the past. Preferred for its durability, local hard granite was the building material of choice, as it had been for the Badami Chalukyas; however, soapstone, which was soft and easily carved, was also used for reliefs and sculptures.

Temples

Vijayanagar temples are surrounded by strong enclosures and characterized by ornate pillared *kalyanamandapa* (marriage halls); tall *rayagopurams* (carved monumental towers at the entrance of the temple) built of wood, brick, and stucco in the Chola style; and adorned with life-sized figures of gods and goddesses. This *dravida* style became popular during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya and is seen in South Indian temples constructed over the next two centuries.

Vijayanagar temples are also known for their carved pillars , which depict charging horses, figures from Hindu mythology, and *yali* (hippogriphs). Some of the larger temples are dedicated to a male deity , with a separate shrine intended for the worship of his female counterpart. Some famous temples exemplifying the Vijayanagar style include the Virupaksha Temple at Hampi and the Hazara Rama temple of Deva Raya I.

Virupaksha Temple, Hampi: This temple has a particularly fine example of the tall, ornate rayagopuram popularized by Vijayanagar architecture.

Pillars at Chandikesvara Temple in Hampi: Pillars of Vijayanagar temples are often engraved with images of yali, or hippogriffs.

Palaces and Courtly Architecture

No royal palace structures from the Vijayanagar period have survived intact, and most of what is known about them has been drawn from archaeological excavations at Hampi. Most of the palaces faced east or north and stood within compounds surrounded by high, tapering stone and earth walls. They were built on raised granite platforms with multiple tiers of mouldings decorated with carved friezes . Palaces usually spanned multiple levels and had tall flights of stairs flanked on either side by balustrades carved with *yali* and elephants. Pillars and beams were made of wood and the roofs of brick and lime concrete. The courtly architecture of Vijayanagar was generally made of mortar mixed with stone rubble and often shows secular styles with Islamic-influenced arches, domes, and vaults.

Sculpture in the Vijayanagar Empire

Vijayanagar sculpture can most commonly be seen in the reliefs, pillars, and monolithic statues of temples.

Learning Objectives

Explain the key traits inherent to the sculpture of the Vijayanagar Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The mingling of South Indian styles under the Vijayanagar Empire resulted in a richness not seen in earlier centuries, including a focus on reliefs and sculpture that surpassed that seen previously in India.
- Soapstone, which was soft and easily carved, was commonly used for reliefs and sculptures. To cover the unevenness of the stone, artists employed brightly painted plaster to smooth over and finish rough surfaces.
- Sculpture was integrally linked with architecture in the creation of Vijayanagar temples.
- Large life-size figures of men, women, gods, and goddesses adorn many Vijayagara temples, and temple pillars often have engravings of charging horses or hippogryphs (*yali*) and other elements of Hindu mythology.
- Another element of the Vijayanagar style is the carving and consecration of large monolithic statues, such as the Sasivekalu Ganesha and Kadalekalu Ganesha at Hampi.

Key Terms

- **Vijayanagar Empire**: A Hindu state based in the Deccan plateau region of South India that reigned from 1336–1646 CE, when it was conquered by the Muslim Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda.
- **gopuram**: A monumental tower, usually ornate, at the entrance of any temple, especially in Southern India.
- **hippogryphs**: A legendary creature that has the front half of an eagle and the hind half of a horse.

Vijayanagar Sculpture

The Vijayanagar Empire's patronage enabled its fine arts and literature to rise to new heights. Its legacy of sculpture, painting, and architecture influenced the development of the arts in South India long after the empire came to an end. The mingling of South Indian styles resulted in a richness not seen in earlier centuries, including a focus on reliefs in addition to sculpture that surpassed that seen previously in India.

Sculpture Material

Preferred for its durability, local hard granite was the building material of choice for architecture; however, soapstone, which was soft and easily carved, was commonly used for reliefs and sculptures. While the use of granite reduced the density of sculptured works, granite was a more durable material for the temple structure. Because granite is prone to flaking, few pieces of individual sculptures reached the high levels of quality seen in previous centuries. In order to cover the unevenness of the stone used in sculptures, artists employed brightly painted plaster to smooth over and finish rough surfaces.

Temple Sculpture

Sculpture was integrally linked with architecture in the creation of Vijayanagar temples. Large life-size figures of men, women, gods, and goddesses adorn the gopuram of many Vijayagara temples. Temple pillars often have engravings of charging horses or hippogryphs (*yali*)—horses standing on hind legs with their fore legs lifted and riders on their backs. The horses on some pillars stand seven to eight feet tall. On the other side of the pillar are often carvings from Hindu mythology.

Another element of the Vijayanagar style is the carving and consecration of large monolithic statues, such as the Sasivekalu Ganesha and Kadalekalu Ganesha at Hampi; the Gommateshvara (Bahubali) monoliths in Karkala and Venur; and the Nandi bull in Lepakshi. Examples of this style can also be seen in the Vijayanagara temples of Kolar, Kanakagiri, Shringeri and other towns of Karnataka; the temples of Tadpatri, Lepakshi, Ahobilam, Tirumala Venkateswara, and Srikalahasti in Andhra Pradesh; and the temples of Vellore, Kumbakonam, Kanchi, and Srirangam in Tamil Nadu.

Horse Pillars in Vijayanagar Temple: Kudure gombe (horse doll) pillars in a mantapa at Hampi.

Painting in the Vijayanagar Empire

Painting in the Vijayanagar Empire, which evolved into the Mysore style of painting, is best illustrated in the elaborate wall paintings of temples.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the characteristics of painting in the Vijayanagar Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Vijayanagar school of painting is renowned for its frescoes of Hindu gods and goddesses and scenes from Hindu mythology on temple walls and ceilings.
- Absorbing the local artistic traditions and customs, the Vijayanagar school of painting gradually evolved into many styles of painting in South India, including the Mysore and Tanjore schools of painting.
- Mysore paintings are known for their elegance, muted colors, and attention to detail; they are characterized by delicate lines , intricate brush strokes, graceful delineation of figures, and the discreet use of bright vegetable colors and lustrous gold leaf .
- Vijayanagar painting is most commonly represented in elaborate manuscripts and wall paintings in Hindu temples.

Key Terms

- **Mysore painting**: An important form of classical South Indian art that originated in and around a town with this name in Karnataka, and evolved from the paintings of Vijayanagar times during the reign of the Vijayanagar Kings.

- **chitrakar**: A caste within the Newar community of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal; traditionally painters and mask makers.

The Vijayanagar School and Mysore Painting

In addition to architecture and sculpture, the Vijayanagar emperors were enthusiastic patrons of painting. The Vijayanagar school of painting was renowned for its frescoes of Hindu mythological themes on temple walls and ceilings. The rulers of Vijayanagar encouraged literature, art, architecture, religious, and philosophical discussions. With the fall of the Vijayanagar empire after the Battle of Talikota in 1565 CE, the artists who were under royal patronage migrated to various other places such as Mysore, Tanjore, and Surpur.

Absorbing the local artistic traditions and customs, the Vijayanagar school of painting gradually evolved into many styles of painting in South India, including the Mysore and Tanjore schools of painting. Mysore painting, an important form of South Indian classical painting, developed out of Vijayanagar painting and originated in the southern town of Mysore, in Karnataka, during the reign of the Vijayanagar emperors.

Characteristics of Vijayanagar Painting

Mysore paintings are known for their elegance, muted colors, and attention to detail. Popular themes include Hindu gods and goddesses and scenes from Hindu mythology. The paintings are characterized by delicate lines, intricate brush strokes, graceful delineation of figures, and the discreet use of bright vegetable colors and lustrous gold leaf. More than mere decorative pieces, the paintings are designed to inspire feelings of devotion and humility in the viewer . The painter's individual skill in giving expression to various emotions is therefore of paramount importance to this style of painting.

The ancient painters in Mysore prepared their own materials. The colors were from natural sources of vegetable, mineral, leaves, stones, and flowers. Brushes were made with squirrel hairs for delicate work, and for superfine lines, a brush made of pointed blades of a special variety of grass was used. Due to the long lasting quality of the earth and vegetable colors used, the original Mysore paintings still retain their freshness and luster even today.

Examples

Wall Paintings

Vijayanagar art includes wall paintings such as the Dashavatara (the Ten Avatars of Vishnu) and the Girijakalyana (the marriage of Parvati, Shiva's consort) in the Virupaksha Temple at Hampi; the Shivapurana murals (the Tales of Shiva) at the Virabhadra temple at Lepakshi; and those at the Kamaakshi and Varadaraja temples at Kanchi.

Painted Ceiling, Virupaksha Temple: 15th century painting, depicting scenes from Hindu mythology in red and gold.

Manuscripts

The most famous of the manuscripts detailing the various nuances of the Mysore school is the Sritattvanidhi, a voluminous work of 1500 pages prepared under the patronage of Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. This pictorial digest is a compendium of illustrations of gods, goddesses, and mythological figures with instructions to painters on an incredible range of topics concerning composition placement, color choice, individual attributes, and mood. The seasons, eco-happenings, animals, and plant world are also effectively depicted in these paintings as co-themes or contexts.

Other Sanskrit literary sources such as the Visnudharmottara Purana , Abhilasitarthacintamani, and Sivatatvaratnakara also highlight the objectives and principles of painting, methods of preparing pigments , brushes, qualifications of the *chitrakar* (the traditional community of painters), and the technique to be followed.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Chandikesvara Temple in Hampi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chandikesvara_Temple_in_Hampi.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1b/View_of_the_Virupaksha_temple_gopura_from_Hemakuta_hill_2.JPG/400px-View_of_the_Virupaksha_temple_gopura_from_Hemakuta_hill_2.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara_Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mysore painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysore_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- monolithic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/monolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- balustrade. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/balustrade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 600px-Horse_pillars_at_entrance_to_water_tank_in_Hampi.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Horse_pillars_at_entrance_to_water_tank_in_Hampi.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara_Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-vijaynagara-painting.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b4/Vijaynagara_Painting.jpg/800px-Vijaynagara_Painting.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mysore Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysore_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vijayanagara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vijayanagara. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.5: Vijayanagar Empire is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.6: The Nayak Dynasty

Nayak Architecture

The Nayak reign in South India was renowned for its unique style of temple architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the temple architecture of the Nayak Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Nayak dynasties emerged in South India after the downfall of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1565, when the Nayak military governors declared independence; they then ruled from the 16th to 18th century.
- Nayak rule was noted for its administrative reforms, its artistic and cultural achievements, and the creation of a unique style of temple architecture. Nayak architectural style was characterized by elaborate hundred- and thousand-pillared *mandapas* (outdoor temple halls), the high *gopurams* (towers) with painted stucco statues on the surface, and long corridors.
- Nayak civic architecture combines Dravidian and Islamic styles, as exemplified by the palace erected by King Thirumalai Nayak of the Madurai Nayak dynasty in 1636 CE.

Key Terms

- **Dravidian**: An architectural idiom that emerged in the Southern part of the Indian subcontinent or South India, consisting primarily of temples with pyramid shaped towers that are constructed of sandstone, soapstone, or granite.
- **mandapa**: In South Indian architecture, a pillared hall or porch fronting a Hindu temple that may be attached or detached from the building.
- **gopuram**: A monumental tower, usually ornate, at the entrance of a temple, especially in Southern India.
- **embossed**: With raised letters or images on the surface.
- **foliated**: Having a structure of thin layers.

Background: The Nayak Dynasty

The Nayak Dynasty emerged in South India after the collapse of the Vijayanagar Empire. The Nayaks, former military governors of the Vijayanagar emperors, declared their independence in 1565 and established their own kingdoms, ruling from the 16th through 18th centuries. Nayak rule was noted for its administrative reforms, its artistic and cultural achievements, and the creation of a unique style of temple architecture. They also renovated temples that had been sacked by the Delhi Sultans. Thanjavur painting, a famous South Indian school of classical painting, also emerged under the Nayaks.

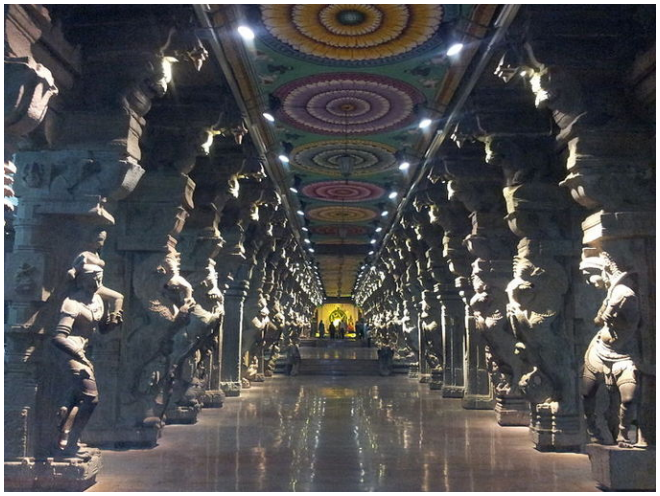
Nayak Architecture

Temples

There are many distinguishing features of Nayak temple architecture as pioneered by the Nayaks of Madurai and Tanjore. Among the main characteristics are the long corridors; the carved hundred-pillared and thousand-pillared *mandapas* (outdoor temple halls or porches); and the high, multi-storied *gopurams* (towers adorning the entrance of a temple), richly decorated with brightly-painted stone and stucco statues of animals, gods, and demons.

Gopuram, Meenakshi Amman Temple: *Gopurams* from the Nayak Period are adorned with brightly painted stucco statues of gods and goddesses, demons, and animals, both real and mythical.

Arguably the greatest example of the Nayak style is the Meenakshi Amman Temple at Madurai that was built between 1623 and 1655 CE. The temple has 10 ornate *gopurams* and a hall with 985 pillars , each of which is a sculpture in the Dravidian style.



Hall of a Thousand Pillars, Meenakshi Amman Temple: Each pillar in these Nayak, many pillared temple halls is carved in the shape of a god, goddess, or mythical beasts such as the griffin.

The temple complex also includes a sacred temple tank, the *Porthamarai Kulam*, or Pond with the Golden Lotus. A portico on the west side of the tank contains remnants of Nayak paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Civic Architecture

Nayak civic architecture combines Dravidian and Islamic styles, as exemplified by the palace erected by King Thirumalai Nayak of the Madurai Nayak dynasty in 1636 CE. The palace features an octagonal throne room topped by a dome that rises 70 feet, held up by massive circular columns linked by Islamic pointed arches . The structure was constructed using foliated brickwork and the surface details finished in stucco mixed from shell lime and egg whites to provide a smooth and glossy texture .

Nayak Painting

In addition to its architecture, the Nayak Dynasty in South India was renowned for the development of Tanjore painting.

Learning Objectives

Discuss painting of the Nayak Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Nayak Dynasty is known not only for its unique style of architecture, but also for its mural and wall paintings.
- The style of Thanjavur painting originated under the Nayaks of Thanjavur around 1600 CE, and one can see the influence of Deccani, Vijayanagar, Maratha, and even European or Company styles of painting.
- Renowned for their surface richness, vivid colors, compact composition , glittering gold foils overlaid on delicate but extensive gesso work, and inlay of glass beads or semi-precious gems, these paintings serve primarily as devotional icons .
- The subjects of most paintings are Hindu gods, goddesses, and saints; there are also many instances when Jain , Sikh , Muslim, other religious and even secular subjects were depicted in Thanjavur paintings.
- Artists under Nayak rule also painted murals and frescoes on the walls of temples and other buildings, mostly featuring religious subjects or images of royal power.
- The Nayaks issued coins made of gold and copper that featured figures of the king, animals, and Hindu gods and goddesses such as Shiva and Parvati.

Key Terms

- **Thanjavur**: A city in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu and an important center of South Indian religion, art, and architecture; known for its particular style of painting that emerged under the Nayak Dynasty in 1600 CE.
- **Puranas**: A vast genre of Indian literature about a wide range of topics, particularly myths, legends, and other traditional lore.

Thanjavur Painting

Ruling from the 16th through 18th centuries in South India, the Nayak Empire was noted for its administrative reforms, its artistic and cultural achievements, and the creation of a unique style of temple architecture. In addition, Thanjavur painting, a famous South Indian school of classical painting, emerged under the Nayaks.

Characteristics

Thanjavur painting originated under the Nayaks of Thanjavur (anglicized as Tanjore) around 1600 CE, and one can see the influence of Deccani, Vijayanagar, Maratha, and even European or Company styles of painting. Renowned for their surface richness, vivid colors, compact composition, glittering gold foils overlaid on delicate but extensive gesso work, and inlay of glass beads or semi-precious gems, these paintings serve primarily as devotional icons. The subjects of most paintings are Hindu gods, goddesses, and saints.

Episodes from Hindu Puranas , *Sthala-puranas*, and other religious texts were visualized and painted with the main figure or figures placed in the central section of the picture, surrounded by several subsidiary figures, themes, and subjects. The figures are static and often located inside decorated arches or curtains. Eyes are broad and the outer lines are either brown or red, except for the god Krishna's eyes, which are depicted in blue. There are also many instances when Jain, Sikh, Muslim, other religious and even secular subjects were depicted in Thanjavur paintings.

Thanjavur Painting: A Thanjavur painting of Krishna and Rukmani.

Process

Thanjavur panel paintings were usually done on solid wooden planks. The artist began by making a preliminary sketch of the image on a base of cloth pasted onto the wood and applying a mixture of zinc oxide and adhesive to the base. After the drawing was completed, the jewelry and apparel on the image were decorated with semi-precious stones, lace, or thread. They applied a mixture of chalk powder and African gum for an embossed look, and the painting was covered with gold foil and finished with dyes to color the figures. Artists under Nayak rule also painted murals and frescoes on the walls of temples and other buildings, mostly featuring religious subjects or images of royal power.

The Nayaka Murals: These murals illustrate images of Nayak Kings and Queens at Srirangam Temple, with inscriptions in the Kannada language.

Coins

The Nayaks issued coins made of gold and copper that featured figures of the king, animals, and Hindu gods and goddesses such as Shiva and Parvati. Both real and mythical, depictions of animals included bears, elephants, lions, and fish (the emblem of the Pandyas who had ruled Madurai before the Vijayanagar and Nayak rulers). The coins also carry inscriptions in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Nagari scripts.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Madurai_Meenakshi_Amman_Temple.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thousand Pillar Mandabam. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thousand_Pillar_Mandabam.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- gopuram. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gopuram. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thirumalai Nayak. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirumalai_Nayak. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Madurai Nayak Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Madurai_Nayak_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Meenakshi Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Meenakshi_Temple. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Keladi Nayaka. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Keladi_Nayaka. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nayak dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayak_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thanjavur Nayak kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanjavur_Nayak_kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- foliated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/foliated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- embossed. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/embossed. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- mandapa. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mandapa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Thanjavur_Painting.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanjavur_painting#/media/File:Thanjavur_Painting.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 637px-nayaka-paintings-1.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nayaka_Paintings_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nayak Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayak_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tanjore Painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanjore_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.6: The Nayak Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.7: The Mughal Period

Architecture of the Mughal Period

Mughal architecture is an Indo-Islamic architectural style that developed in India under the patronage of the Mughal Empire.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the architectural accomplishments under the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mughal architecture is a remarkably symmetrical and decorative amalgam of Persian, Turkish, and Indian architecture.
- Mughal architecture first developed and flourished during the reign of Akbar the Great (1556–1605), where it was known for its extensive use of red sandstone as a building material.
- Humayun's Tomb, the sandstone mausoleum of Akbar's father, was built during this period of Mughal architecture.
- Architecture reached its peak in refinement and attention to detail under Shah Jahan (1628–1658), who commissioned the famous Taj Mahal , a white marble mausoleum dedicated to his wife Mumtaz Mahal.
- Mughal architecture began to decline after the death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707.

Key Terms

- **finial**: Any decorative fitting at the peak of a gable or on the top of a flagpole, fence post, or staircase newel post.
- **pietra dura**: Hard and fine stones in general, as used for inlay and distinguished from the softer stones used in building.
- **mausoleum**: A large stately tomb or a building housing such a tomb or several tombs.
- **lattice**: A flat panel constructed with widely spaced crossed thin strips of wood or other material, commonly used as a garden trellis.

Overview: Mughal Architecture

Mughal architecture is the distinctive Indo-Islamic architectural style that developed in northern and central India under the patronage of Mughal emperors from the 16th to the 18th century. It is a remarkably symmetrical and decorative amalgam of Persian, Turkish, and Indian architecture. The Mughals were also renowned for creating exquisite gardens in the Persian *charbagh* layout, in which the quadrilateral gardens were divided by walkways or flowing water into four smaller parts.

Architecture Under Akbar

Early Mughal architecture first developed during the reign of Akbar the Great (1556–1605), who commissioned palaces, mosques , gardens, and mausoleums. The architecture was a synthesis of Persian, Turkic, Timurid Iranian, Central Asian, and Indian Hindu and Muslim styles. Akbari architecture is also remarkable for its large scale use of sandstone, evident both in the construction of Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's royal city, and Akbar's own tomb in Sikandra. The mosque at Fatehpur Sikri boasts the Buland Darwaza, the largest gateway of its kind in India. Early Mughal mosques had massive enclosed courtyards and domed shallow prayer halls.

Tomb of Humayun

One of the most stellar accomplishments of Mughal architecture under Akbar is the tomb of his father Humayun, situated in Delhi. Commissioned in 1562 by Humayun's wife, Hamida Banu Begum, and designed by a Persian architect, Humayun's Tomb was the first garden tomb on the Indian subcontinent and the first structure to use red sandstone on such a large scale. It is also the first Indian building to use the Persian double dome , with an outer layer supporting a white marble exterior—a material not seen in earlier Mughal architecture—and the inner layer giving shape to the cavernous interior volume . The use of indigenous Rajasthani decorative elements is particularly striking, including the small canopies or *chhatris* (elevated, dome shaped pavilions) surrounding the central dome. It boasts the use of the *pietra dura* technique, with marble and even stone inlay ornamentation in geometrical and arabesque patterns on the facade of the mausoleum, and *jali* or latticed stone carving decoration. This style of decorative facade was an important addition to Mughal architecture and flourished in later Mughal mausolea, including the Taj Mahal.

Humayun’s Tomb: Humayun’s Tomb, seen from the main gateway.

Architecture Under Jahangir

Under the rule of Jahangir (1605—1627), Mughal architecture became more Persian than Indian. Jahangir’s great mosque at Lahore is a good example of the Persian style and is covered with enameled tiles. At Agra, the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daula, completed in 1628, was built entirely of white marble and decorated in elaborate *pietra dura* mosaic , an inlay technique of using cut and fitted, highly polished colored stones to create images.

Architecture Under Shah Jahan

The vision of Shah Jahan (1628—1658) introduced a delicate elegance and detail to Mughal architecture, illustrated in the Jama Masjid in Delhi, the Moti Masjid situated within the Agra Fort, and the Sheesh Mahal in the Lahore Fort, which makes spectacular use of *pietra dura* and complex mirror work. Shah Jahan’s most famous achievement, however, is indisputably the Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal

Located in Agra, the Taj Mahal is a white marble mausoleum built between 1632 and 1648 by Shah Jahan in memory of his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Constructed by 20,000 men, it represents the Islamic garden of paradise and is widely regarded as the greatest achievement in Mughal architecture.

The Taj Mahal: The Taj Majal, built under Shah Jahan, represents the Islamic garden of paradise and is widely regarded as the greatest achievement in Mughal architecture.

The mausoleum rests in the middle of a large square plinth and has four almost identical facades, each with a large arch-shaped doorway. It is topped by a large double dome and a finial , combining both the traditional Islamic motif of the crescent moon and the Hindu symbol of the trident, associated with the god Shiva. The central dome is adorned with a lotus design and is surrounded by four smaller *chhatris*, each of which also has the same lotus motif. Four tall minarets extend from the corners of the plinth.

The exterior decorations of the Taj Mahal include calligraphy , abstract forms , verses from the Koran, and vegetable motifs, executed in paint, stucco , carvings, and *pietra dura* work. The interior decorations also feature inlay work of precious and semi-precious gemstones. Muslim tradition forbids elaborate decoration of graves, and the bodies of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal are interred in a plain crypt underneath the mausoleum. However, the inner tomb features two cenotaphs, or false tombs, that are richly decorated with inlays of semi-precious stones forming vines and flowers and surrounded by *jali* screens, or latticed screens with ornamental patterns constructed through the use of calligraphy and geometry.

Inside the inner tomb: This is an example of *pietra dura* inlay work and lattice carvings from the interior of the Taj Mahal.

Aurangzeb and Later Mughal Architecture

During Aurangzeb's reign (1658–1707), brick and rubble with stucco ornamentation replaced squared stone and marble as the building materials of choice. Aurangzeb was responsible for additions to the Lahore Fort: building one of the 13 gates, which was named for him, and building the Badshahi mosque, a structure constructed from brick with red sandstone facades. In general, however, Mughal architecture had begun to decline during Aurangzeb's reign, a process that would accelerate after his death.

Painting of the Mughal Period

Mughal miniature painting was a blend of Persian and Indian styles that developed in Mughal courts between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb periods of Mughal painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mughal painting emerged from the Persian miniature painting tradition, with additional Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain influences; it usually took the form of book illustrations or single sheets preserved in albums.
- There are four periods commonly associated with Mughal art, each named for the emperor under whom the art form developed: the Akbar Period, the Jahangir Period, the Shah Jahan Period, and the Aurangzeb and Later Mughal Period.
- The emperor Akbar set up a large atelier with artists from all parts of his empire. The atelier was responsible for illustrating books on a variety of subjects and developed the methods and techniques used by subsequent Mughal painters.
- The emperor Jahangir was influenced by European art and encouraged his atelier to emulate the single point perspective favored by European painters, unlike the flattened, multi-layered style traditionally used in miniature painting.
- While the artistic focus of the Mughal court shifted primarily to architecture under Shah Jahan, painting continued to flourish; the style became notably more rigid, and the colors used became jewel-like in their brilliance. The emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707) did not encourage Mughal painting, and only a few portraits survive from his court. Mughal painting essentially came to an end during the reign of Shah Alam II (1759–1806).

Key Terms

- **miniature**: A small, highly detailed painting or portrait.

- **atelier**: A workshop or studio meant for an artist, designer, or fashion house.

Overview: Mughal Painting

Mughal painting is a style of South Asian miniature painting that developed in the courts of the Mughal Emperors between the 16th and 19th centuries. It emerged from the Persian miniature painting tradition with additional Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain influences. Mughal painting usually took the form of book illustrations or single sheets preserved in albums. There are four periods commonly associate with Mughal art, each named for the emperor under whom the art form developed: the Akbar Period, the Jahangir Period, the Shah Jahan Period, and the Aurangzeb Period.

Origins

Mughal painting was an amalgam of Ilkhanate Persian and Indian techniques and ideas. Under the Delhi Sultanate, the early 16th century had been a period of artistic inventiveness during which a previously formal and abstract style had begun to make way for a more vigorous and human mode of expression. After Mughal victory over the Delhi Sultanate in 1526, the tradition of miniature painting in India further abandoned the high abstraction of the Persian style and began to adopt a more realistic style of portraiture and of drawing plants and animals.

The Akbar Period (1556–1605)

It was under the reign of Akbar the Great (1556–1605) that Mughal painting came into its own. Trained in painting in his youth by the Persian master ‘Abd al-Samad, Akbar was responsible for setting up the first atelier of court painters, which he staffed with artists from all parts of India whose work he took a keen interest in. This atelier was chiefly responsible for illustrating books on a variety of subjects: histories, romances, poetry, legends, and fables of both Persian and Indian origin.

One of the greatest achievements of Mughal painting under Akbar may be found in the stupendously illustrated *Hamzanama* or *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, a narration of the legendary exploits of Amir Hamza, the uncle of Muhammad . The size of this manuscript was unprecedented: spanning 14 volumes , it originally contained 1400 illustrations of an unusually large size (approx. 25″ x 16″). Only about 200 of these original illustrations survive today. It took 14 years (1562–1577) and over a hundred men to complete. The paintings mark a significant departure from the Persian style in their bent towards naturalism , vigorous portrayal of movement and emotion, and bold color. Each form is individually modeled, and the figures are interrelated in closely unified compositions . Depth is indicated by a preference for diagonals.

The Battle of Mazandaran: This painting is number 38 in the 7th volume of the *Hamzanama*. It depicts a battle scene in which the protagonists, Khwajah ‘Umar and Hamzah, and their armies engage in fierce battle. Originally clearly depicted, the faces were erased by iconoclasts and then repainted in more recent times. Only the face of the groom wearing an orange turban in the center of the left edge has been left untouched.

Methods and Techniques Under Akbar

The methods most commonly used by Mughal painters were first developed in Akbar’s great atelier. Illustrations were usually executed by groups of painters, including a colorist (who was responsible for the actual painting) and specialists in portraiture and the mixing of colors. Leading this group was the designer, an artist of the highest caliber, who formulated the composition and sketched the outline into the spaces in the manuscripts designated by the calligraphers for illustration. A thin wash of white was then applied, through which the outline remained visible. The colors were then applied in several thin layers and rubbed down with an agate burnisher to produce a glowing, enamel-like finish. The colors used were mostly mineral and sometimes vegetable dyes, and the fine brushes were made from squirrel’s tail or camel hair.

The Jahangir Period (1605–1627)

Like his father Akbar, the emperor Jahangir showed a keen interest in painting and maintained his own atelier. The tradition of illustrating books assumed secondary importance to portraiture during Jahangir’s reign because of the emperor’s own preference for portraits. Among the finest works of his reign are elaborate court scenes depicting him surrounded by his courtiers. These are large scale exercises in portraiture, and the likeness of each figure is produced faithfully. The composition lacks the vigor, movement, and vivid color characterized by the works of Akbar’s reign; the figures are more formally ordered, the colors soft and harmonious, and the brushwork particularly fine. Mughal paintings during Jahangir’s reign also boast magnificent floral and geometric borders.

European Influence

Jahangir was also deeply influenced by European painting, having come into contact with the English crown and received gifts of oil paintings from England. He encouraged his atelier to emulate the single point perspective favored by European painters, unlike the flattened, multi-layered style traditionally used in miniature painting. These influences are evident in the illustrations of the *Jahangirnama*, a biographical account of Jahangir’s own life. In addition to portraits, many works included plant and animal studies and became part of lavishly finished albums. Most illuminated manuscripts were created by a single painter.

Jahangir in Darbar: Illustration of a court scene from the *Jahangirnama*, c. 1620. Jahangir makes a public appearance on a balcony as a large group of courtiers stand below.

The Shah Jahan Period (1628–1658)

While the artistic focus of the Mughal court shifted primarily to architecture under Shah Jahan, painting continued to flourish. The style became notably more rigid, and portraits resembled abstract effigies . Paintings of this period were particularly opulent, as the colors used became jewel-like in their brilliance. Popular themes included musical parties, lovers in terraces and gardens—sometimes locked in intimate embraces—and ascetics and holy men.

The Aurangzeb and Late Mughal Period (1658–1809)

The emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707) did not encourage Mughal painting, and only a few portraits survive from his court. Most of these were accomplished in the cold, abstract style of Shah Jahan. While the art form had gathered sufficient momentum to invite patronage in other courts—Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh alike—the absence of strong imperial backing ushered in a decline of the art form. A brief revival occurred during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719–1748), who was passionately devoted to the arts, but this was only temporary. Mughal painting essentially came to an end during the reign of Shah Alam II (1759–1806), and the artists of his disintegrated court contented themselves with copying masterpieces of the past.

Rajput Painting of the Mughal Period

Rajput miniature painting developed in the courts of the Hindu Rajputs between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the different techniques and schools associated with both the Rajasthani and the Pahari styles of Rajput painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rajput painting flowed primarily from the indigenous Western Indian style of manuscript illustration that had flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries, but was also greatly influenced by Mughal painting.
- Rajput painting usually took the form of miniatures in manuscripts or on single sheets kept in albums, although examples of this style can also be found on the walls of Rajput palaces, forts, and mansions.
- Popular themes include the life of the god Krishna; scenes from Hindu epics; pictorial representations of the ragamala (musical modes); women, lovers and romance; portraits; and court and hunting scenes.
- Rajput painting can be divided into two styles: the Rajasthani style, associated with the Rajput courts in Rajasthan, and the Pahari style, associated with the Rajput courts of the Himalayan foothills.

Key Terms

- **Stylized**: Represented according to some convention, rather than in a realistic or literal manner.
- **lyricism**: Depth of feeling and imagination.

Overview: The Hindu Rajput Kingdoms

The Rajputs are members of patrilineal clans in western, central, and northern India who rose to prominence between the 6th and 12th centuries. From the beginning of the 9th century, these Rajput dynasties dominated many parts of northern India, and they established the overwhelming majority of Hindu princely states in Rajasthan and Surashtra in northwestern India, which they ruled until the 20th century. Some important dynasties include the Chauhan Dynasty of Ajmer and Delhi (956–1192); the Solanki Dynasty of present day Gujarat (945–1297); and the Chandela Dynasty of the Bundelkhand Region of central India (10th to 13th centuries). During the period of Islamic invasions (11th through 16th centuries), the Rajput kingdoms proved to be the primary obstacle to the complete Muslim conquest of Hindu India.

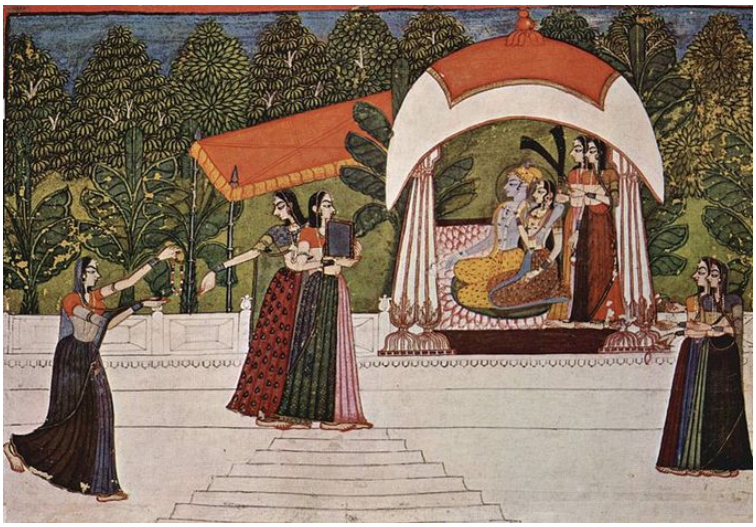
Rajput and Mughal Relations

Under the Mughal emperor Akbar's reign (1556–1605 CE), the Rajputs accepted Mughal authority in exchange for religious accommodation and were admitted into the emperor's court. Many Rajputs assumed positions in Akbar's government and army or formed marital alliances with him. Mughal-Rajput relations suffered, however, under the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707), who did not pursue the policy of religious accommodation of his predecessors.

Through their many centuries of rule in northern India, the Rajputs built spectacular temples, forts, and palaces and were eager patrons of painting. Rajput and Mughal art and architecture were also important influences on one another once the two powers came into contact.

Rajput Painting

Rajput painting is the style of Indian miniature painting associated with the royal courts of the Rajputs between the 16th and the 19th centuries. It flowed primarily from the indigenous Western Indian style of manuscript illustration that had flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries, but it was also greatly influenced by Mughal painting. Rajput painting usually took the form of miniatures in manuscripts or on single sheets kept in albums, although examples of this style can also be found on the walls of Rajput palaces, forts, or *havelis* (mansions). Early Rajput painting was almost exclusively devoted to the life and deeds of Krishna, the Hindu cowherd god. Other popular themes included scenes from Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*; pictorial representations of the *ragamala* (musical modes); women, lovers, and romance; portraits; and court and hunting scenes.



Krishna and Radha in a Pavilion: An 18th century Rajput painting by the artist Nihâl Chand, chief painter at the court of Kishangarh. Krishna and his companions are by far the most popular theme of Rajput painting.

The colors used in Rajput painting were extracted from minerals, plant sources, conch shells, beetle wings, and sometimes even precious stones. Gold and silver were also used. The preparation of these colors was a lengthy process that could take weeks to accomplish. The brushes used were very fine, in keeping with the requirements of fine miniature painting.

Styles of Painting

Rajput painting can be divided into two styles: the Rajasthani style, associated with the Rajput courts in Rajasthan, and the Pahari style, associated with the Rajput courts of the Himalayan foothills.

The Rajasthani Style

Emerging in the last decades of the 16th century, Rajasthani art is usually divided into four major schools, each centered on different courts and based on differences in artistic style. These four schools are the Mewar school, the Marwar school, the Hadoti school, and the Dhundar school.

- The Mewar school is associated with the courts of Chavand, Nathwara, Devgarh, Udaipur, and Sawar and is characterized by simplicity and vivid colors. It produced a large number of devotional paintings for the pilgrim trade.

Maharana Sangram Singh II of Mewar: Udaipur, Mewar, 1725–35. Opaque watercolor on paper, set with pearls and precious stones. This is a good example of portraiture in the Rajput style and of the Mewar School's work.

- The Marwar school is associated with the courts of Kishangarh, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Pali, and Ghanerao courts. It is best known for its fine miniature portraits from the second half of the 17th century and a large body of highly stylized and colorful painting from the 19th century.
- The Hadoti school is associated with the courts of Kota, Bundi, and Jhalawar and is remarkable for its vivid portrayal of movement, strength, and vitality , best seen in depictions of hunting and sports scenes.
- The Dhundar school is associated with the courts of Amber, Jaipur, Shekhawati, and Uniara and is characterized by formal yet rich portraits, very large paintings of the deeds of Krishna, and Western influences in the 19th century.

The Pahari Style

The Pahari style of miniature painting and book illustration developed in the independent states of the Himalayan foothills between the 17th and 18th centuries and began to decline after 1800. This style consists of two schools: the Basohli school and the Kangra school.

- The Basohli school flourished toward the end of the 17th century; it is best known for its bold use of color, intense emotionality, stylized facial types shown in profile with prominent eyes, and distinctive depictions of jewelry.
- The Kangra school emerged in the mid-18th century as the Basohli style began to fade and is characterized by curving lines , calmer colors, and delicate lyricism .

Utka Nayika: A Lady Awaits Her Lover in the Forest: An example of Pahari painting from the Kangra school dated between 1775–1780. The subject matter—lovers and romance—is a popular theme in Rajput painting.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Humayun's Tomb from the entrance, Delhi. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Humayun's_Tomb_from_the_entrance,_Delhi.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Taj Mahal, Agra, India edit2. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Taj_Mahal,_Agra,_India_edit2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- TajCenotaphs3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TajCenotaphs3.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mughal architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Taj Mahal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Taj_Mahal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Humayun's Tomb. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Humayun's_Tomb. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mughal Gardens. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_Gardens. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lattice. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lattice. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mausoleum. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mausoleum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- finial. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/finial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pietra dura. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pietra_dura. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The battle of Mazandaran. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_battle_of_Mazandaran.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Jahangir in Darbar, from the Jahangir-nama, c.1620. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jahangir_in_Darbar,_from_the_Jahangir-nama,_c.1620.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mughal painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughal_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hamzanama. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamzanama. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- miniature. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/miniature. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- atelier. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/atelier. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Utka Nayika awaits her lover in the forest. Kangra painting, ca.1775-1780.. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/10/Utka_Nayika._A_lady_awaits_her_lover_in_the_forest._1775-1780._Kangra,_British_Museum,_London.jpg/367px-Utka_Nayika._A_lady_awaits_her_lover_in_the_forest._1775-1780._Kangra,_British_Museum,_London.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e9/1_Maharana_Sangram_Singh_II_of_Mewar._Udaipur,_Mewar,_1725-35,_Opaque_watercolor_on_paper,_set_with_pearls_and_precious_stones._Collection_Gopi_Krishna_Kanoria,_Patna..jpg/422px-thumbnail.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nihu00e2l Chand. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nih%C3%A2l_Chand. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Rajput painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajput_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/lyricism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Stylized. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Stylized. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rajput. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajput. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hindu Rajput Kingdoms. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/307859/textbooks/painting-1-8adf00aa-c11d-45a0-864a-1de2e11ad1f5/art-of-south-and-southeast-asia-before-1200-south-and-southeast-asia-after-1200-17/india-161/hindu-rajput-kingdoms-642-5427/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.7: The Mughal Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.8: India under British Imperialism

Indian Architecture under British Imperialism

The establishment of the British Empire greatly influenced the architecture and culture of India and led to a fusion of styles and techniques.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the changes that took place in Indian architecture during the establishment of the British Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The establishment of the British Empire in the 18th century and the subsequent westernization of India paved the way for a radical change of artistic taste, and a new style of art and architecture emerged.
- As a whole, the European advent was marked by a relative insensitivity to native art traditions; former Indian patrons of art became less wealthy and influential, and Western art became more ubiquitous .
- The fusion of Indian traditions with European style at this time became evident in architectural styles; as with the Mughals, architecture under European colonial rule became an emblem of power designed to endorse the occupying power.
- The Indo-Saracenic Revival was an architectural style and movement in the late 19th century, where public and government buildings were often rendered on an intentionally grand scale.

Key Terms

- **Company style**: A hybrid Indo-European style of paintings made in India by Indian artists, many of whom worked for European patrons in the British East India Company or other foreign Companies in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- **aesthetic**: Concerned with beauty, artistic impact, or appearance.
- **advent**: Coming; coming to; approach; arrival.
- **ubiquitous**: Being everywhere at once: omnipresent.

Impact of British Imperialism in India

The British arrived in India in 1615; over the centuries, they gradually overthrew the Maratha and Sikh empires and other small independent kingdoms. The establishment of the British Empire in the 18th century laid the foundation for modern India's contact with the West. Westernization paved the way for a radical change of artistic taste, and a style emerged that represented the adjustment of traditional artists to new fashions and demands.

British colonial rule had a great impact on Indian art. As a whole, the European advent was marked by a relative insensitivity to native art traditions; former Indian patrons of art became less wealthy and influential, and Western art became more ubiquitous as the British Empire established schools of art in major cities, such as the Bombay Art Society in 1888. The Company style of paintings, for example, became common, created by Indian artists working for European patrons of the East India Company . By 1858, the British government took over the task of administration of India under the British Raj. The fusion of Indian traditions with European style at this time became evident in architectural styles. Toward the end of the 19th century, rising nationalism attempted a conscious revival of Indian art.

Architecture Under British Imperialism

As with the Mughals, architecture under European colonial rule became an emblem of power designed to endorse the occupying power. Numerous European countries invaded India and created architectural styles reflective of their ancestral and adopted homes. The European colonizers created architecture that symbolized their mission of conquest, dedicated to the state or religion. Among the key British architects of this time were Robert Fellowes Chisholm, Charles Mant, Henry Irwin, William Emerson, George Wittet, and Frederick Stevens.

The Indo-Saracenic Revival

The Indo-Saracenic Revival (also known as Indo- Gothic , Mughal-Gothic, Neo-Mughal, or Hindu-Gothic) was an architectural style and movement by British architects in the late 19th century. It drew elements from native Indo-Islamic and Indian architecture and combined them with Gothic revival and Neo-Classical styles favored in Britain. Public and government buildings, such as clock towers, courthouses, municipal buildings, colleges, and town halls, were often rendered on an intentionally grand scale, reflecting and promoting a notion of an invincible British Empire. Infrastructure was composed of iron, steel, and poured concrete and included domes , overhanging eaves, pointed arches , vaulted roofs, pinnacles , open pavilions, and pierced open arcading.

Municipal Corporation Building, Mumbai: This municipal building in Mumbai reflects the Indo-Saracenic architecture of its time.

Examples of Colonial Architecture

The major cities colonized during this period were Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Agra, Bankipore, Karachi, Nagpur, Bhopal, and Hyderabad. St. Andrew’s Kirk in Madras (now Chennai) is known for its colonial architecture. The building is circular in form and is sided by two rectangular sections; the entrance is lined with 12 colonnades and two British lions, with the motto of East India Company engraved on them. The interior holds 16 columns , and the dome is painted blue and decorated with gold stars.

St. Andrew's Church: St. Andrew's Church in present day Chennai is an example of British colonial architecture in India.

The Victoria Memorial in Calcutta is another symbol of the British Empire, built as a monument in tribute to Queen Victoria's reign. The plan of the building consists of one large central part covered with a larger dome, with colonnades separating the two chambers. Each corner holds a smaller dome and is floored with marble plinth. The memorial stands on 26 acres of garden surrounded by reflective pools.

Indian Painting under British Imperialism

Under British Imperialism, painting in India took on many western characteristics throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the effects the arrival of the British Empire had on Indian painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The establishment of the British Empire in the 18th century and the subsequent westernization of India paved the way for a radical change of artistic taste, and a new style of art and painting emerged.
- In the 18th century, the merchants of the East India Company provided a large market for native art, and a distinct genre of watercolor painting developed known as the Company style .
- The attitude in the mid-19th century was one of general British disregard for Indian art, followed by the establishment of British schools and the propagation of Western values in art education.
- Raja Ravi Varma was among the first Indian painters to use Western techniques to illustrate Indian themes and traditions.
- The Bengal School of Art arose in the early 20th century as an avant garde and nationalist movement reacting against the Western academic art styles; instead, it promoted a return to paintings such as the Mughal miniatures .

Key Terms

- **Company style**: A hybrid Indo-European style of paintings made in India by Indian artists, many of whom worked for European patrons in the British East India Company or other foreign Companies in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- **East India Company**: An English and later British joint-stock company, which was formed to pursue trade with the East Indies but ended up trading mainly with the Indian subcontinent and Qing China.

Overview: British Imperialism and Art

British colonial rule had a great impact on Indian art. Old patrons of art became less wealthy and influential, and Western art more ubiquitous as the British Empire established schools of art in major cities, such as the Bombay Art Society in 1888. The Company

style of paintings became common, created by Indian artists working for European patrons of the East India Company. The style was mainly Romanticized, with watercolor the primary medium used to convey soft textures and tones . By 1858, the British government took over the task of administration of India under the British Raj, and the fusion of Indian traditions with European style at this time is evident in a great deal of the artwork from this period.

Painting Under British Imperialism

The Company Style

In the 18th century, oil and easel painting brought many European artists to India in search of fame and fortune, including Thomas and William Daniel, Joshua Reynolds, George Chinnery, and others. The merchants of the East India Company provided a large market for native art in the 18th century, and a distinct genre of watercolor painting developed that depicted scenes of everyday life, regalia of princely courts, and Indian festivities and rituals . Referred to as the Company style or Patna style, this style of painting flourished at first in Murshidabad and spread to other cities of British India.

The Establishment of Art Schools

While the 18th century saw moderate British manifestations of Indian art, monuments, literature, and culture , the attitude in the mid-19th century shifted to one of disregard for Indian art. To propagate Western values in art education along with the colonial agenda, the British established art schools in Calcutta and Madras in 1854 and in Bombay in 1857. After 1857, John Griffith and John Lockwood Kipling came out to India together and headed the Sir JJ School of Art. Griffith was considered one of the finest Victorian painters to come to India, and Kipling went on to head the Mayo School of Arts in 1878.

Raja Ravi Varma

Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906) was a remarkable self-taught Indian painter from the princely state of Travancore. He is considered the first of the modernists, and he advocated for the use of Western techniques to develop a new aesthetic in the subjective interpretation of Indian culture. His work was considered to be among the best examples of the fusion of Indian traditions with the techniques of European academic art, and it came to play an important role in the development of the Indian national consciousness.

Shakuntal by Ravi Varma: Ravi Varma’s work, such as this painting, used Western composition, perspective, and realism to illustrate Indian themes.

The Bengal School

As more artists began using Western ideas of composition , perspective , and realism to illustrate Indian themes, others rebelled against these styles. The Bengal School of Art, commonly referred to as the Bengal School, arose in the early 20th century as an avant garde and nationalist movement reacting against the Western academic art styles previously promoted in India. Also known as “Indian style of painting” in its early days, it was led by Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951) and supported by British art teacher E. B. Havell. Following the influence of Indian spiritual ideas in the West, Havell attempted to reform the teaching methods at the Calcutta School of Art by encouraging students to imitate Mughal miniatures. This caused controversy among some who

considered it to be a retrogressive move; however, Havell and Tagore believed the technique to be expressive of India's distinct spiritual qualities, as opposed to the "materialism" of the West.

The best known painting by Tagore is *Bharat Mata* ("Mother India"), depicting a young woman with four arms in the manner of Hindu deities , holding objects symbolic of India's national aspirations. Other painters and artists of the Bengal school included Gaganendranath Tagore, Asit Kumar Haldar, M.A.R Chughtai, Sunayani Devi, Kshitindranath Majumdar, Nandalal Bose, Kalipada Ghoshal, Sughra Rababi, and Sudhir Khastgir. The Bengal school eventually paved the way for future modernist movements, and its influence declined in the 1920s.

Bharat Mata, a painting by Abanindranath Tagore: *Bharat Mata* by Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951), a nephew of the poet Rabindranath Tagore and a pioneer of the movement that led to the Bengal School.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Municipal Corporation Building, Mumbai. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Municipal_Corporation_Building,_Mumbai.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 375px-St_Andrews_Church_-_The_Kirk.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:St_Andrews_Church_-_The_Kirk.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modern Indian painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Indian_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indo-Saracenic Revival architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Saracenic_Revival_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bengal school of art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengal_school_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ubiquitous. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ubiquitous. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aesthetic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aesthetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- advent. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/advent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- bharat-mata.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bharat_Mata.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- -varma-shakuntala-columbia.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Indian_painting. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shakuntala (Raja Ravi Varma). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakuntala_(Raja_Ravi_Varma). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts of the Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modern Indian painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Indian_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bengal School of Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengal_school_of_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.8: India under British Imperialism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.9: Contemporary Indian Art

Contemporary Indian Art

Contemporary Indian art fuses multiple concepts and forms of media to express both traditional Indian and non-traditional themes.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of the Progressive Artist's Group, Ray's development of Pseudorealism, and the development of contemporary architecture in India

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Toward the end of the 19th century, the Bengal School of Art helped to reconnect Indian artists with their heritage past and helped pave the way for the modernist movement.
- After India gained independence in 1947, a group of artists formed the Progressive Artist's Group, which profoundly changed Indian art.
- Often showing the influence of Western styles , modern Indian art tends to be inspired by Indian themes and images.
- After the economic liberalization of India in the 1990s, artists continued to introduce new concepts outside of previous academic traditions, such as the Pseudorealism of Devajyoti Ray.

Key Terms

- **idiom**: An artistic style (for example, in art, architecture, or music); an instance of such a style.
- **diaspora**: A dispersed group, such as the Jews outside of the land of Israel.

The Bengal School of Art

Western and colonial influence replaced much of traditional Indian painting during the end of the 19th century until the Bengal School of Art, established by Abanindranath Tagore and E. B. Havell, consciously attempted to reconnect Indian artists with their past. Paving the way for the future modernist movement, the Bengal School did a great deal to reshape contemporary taste by drawing inspiration from the past and bringing awareness to the heritage of Indian artists. As of 2012, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Bengal School of Art among scholars and connoisseurs, and the School continues to produce some of the best artists of modern India today, including Ganesh Pyne, Manishi Dey, Nirmal Dutta, Nilima Dutta, Jahar Dasgupta, Bikash Bhattacharjee, Sudip Roy, Devajyoti Ray, and Paresh Maiti.

Post-Independence Indian Art

By the time India gained independence in 1947, several schools of art in India provided access to modern techniques and ideas. This same year a group of six artists (K. H. Ara, S. K. Bakre, H. A. Gade, M. F. Husain, S. H. Raza, and F. N. Souza) founded the Progressive Artist's Group, a group aimed at establishing new ways of expressing Indian art in the post-colonial era. Though the group was dissolved in 1956, it was profoundly influential in changing the idiom of Indian art.

Modern Indian art typically shows the influence of Western styles but is often inspired by Indian themes and images. For example, S. H. Raza's works are mainly abstracts in oil or acrylic with a very rich use of color, replete with icons from Indian cosmology as well as its philosophy. F. N. Souza uses an expressionistic style to illustrate both the highs and lows of Indian social life. M. F. Husain utilized a modified Cubist style to create narrative paintings. Jayasri Burman works primarily in watercolor, using rich, strong hues and bold themes to portray female figures or mythic elements, such as hybrid animals with human heads. Other well-known artists associated with the group—and who continue to be influential today—include Bal Chabda, Manishi Dey, Mukul Dey, V. S. Gaitonde, Ram Kumar, Tyeb Mehta, and Akbar Padamsee.

F. N. Souza – Balzac etcetera, 1971: Artist Souza uses an expressionistic style to capture aspects of Indian life in his paintings.

From the 1990s onward, Indian artists began to increase the number of forms they used in their work. After the economic liberalization of the country that occurred during that decade, Indian art began to introduce new concepts and to work both within and outside of previous academic traditions. For example, artist Devajyoti Ray introduced a new genre of art called Pseudorealism, in which he used offbeat colors and abstract shapes to create imagery depicting regular scenes of Indian life. Akbar Padamsee, a contemporary Indian artist and painter, has worked with various mediums, from oil painting , plastic emulsion, water color, sculpture, and printmaking to computer graphics and photography. He has also worked as a filmmaker, sculptor, photographer, engraver, and lithographer. Other leading artists exploring radical new directions in both painting and sculpture include Subodh Gupta, Narayanan Ramachandran, Vivan Sundaram, and Jitish Kallat. The abstract painter Natvar Bhavsar and postminimalist sculptor Anish Kapoor have gained attention in the international art market, and other major artists continue to gain international recognition among both the Indian diaspora and non-Indian audiences.

Turning the World Upside Down by Anish Kapoor: Contemporary artist Anish Kapoor utilizes postminimalism in sculptural work.

Sitting Bridgette: While not a work of Devajyoti Ray, this painting is a good example of the pseudorealistic style.

Contemporary Architecture, Fashion, and Other Forms of Art

Outside of painting, the 1980s were marked by the growth of fashion schools in India, increased involvement of women in the fashion industry, and a widespread modification to Indian clothing as Indian and Western styles began to fuse.

Contemporary Indian architecture tends to be cosmopolitan, with extremely compact and densely populated cities. Mumbai's Nariman Point is famous for its Art Deco buildings; other notable works include the Lotus Temple in New Delhi (also known as the Bahá'í House, recognized for its flower-like shape) and modern urban developments like Chandigarh.

The India Art Fair, previously known as the India Art Summit, is an Indian modern and contemporary art fair held annually in New Delhi. First held in 2008, it is India's largest art fair and includes paintings, sculptures, photography, mixed media , prints, drawings, and video art . Its fourth edition , held in 2012, canvassed 98 exhibitors from 20 countries. Over the years, the fair has showcased Indian modernists (including those from the Progressive Artists' Group), Indian diaspora artists, contemporary Indian art, international artists, and art from the subcontinent.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Turning the world upside down by Anish Kapoor in Israel Museum. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turning_the_world_upside_down_by_Anish_Kapoor_in_Israel_Museum.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Souzamid-v1a. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Souzamid-v1a.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sitting Bridgette1. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sitting_Bridgette1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modern Indian painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Indian_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- MF Hussain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/MF_Hussain. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jayasri Burman. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jayasri_Burman. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Contemporary Indian culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_Indian_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Contemporary Indian culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_Indian_culture%23Clothing. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- India Art Fair. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/India_Art_Fair. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- S. H. Raza. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/S._H._Raza. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual Arts Of The Indian Subcontinent. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Visual_Arts_Of_The_Indian_Subcontinent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Arts Trust u2013 Institute of Contemporary Indian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Arts_Trust_%E2%80%93_Institute_of_Contemporary_Indian_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Francis Newton Souza. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Newton_Souza. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Akbar Padamsee. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Akbar_Padamsee. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- diaspora. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diaspora. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- idiom. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/idiom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.9: Contemporary Indian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.10: Thai Art

Thai Buddhist Sculpture

The history of Thai Buddhist sculpture can be divided into three broad phases: the Dwaravati period, the Sukhothai period, and the Ayutthaya period.

Learning Objectives

Identify the primary features of the Dwaravati, Sukhothai, and Ayutthaya periods in Thailand

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Traditional Thai art primarily consists of Buddhist art with influences from Thai folklore and Hinduism; Thai sculptures most often depict images of the Buddha and other characters from Buddhist and Hindu mythology.
- From the 1st to the 7th centuries, art in Thailand was influenced by direct contact with Indian traders and the expansion of the Mon Kingdom, leading to the creation of Hindu and Buddhist art inspired by Indian traditions.
- The history of Buddhist sculpture in Thailand until the 18th century can be divided into three broad phases: the Dwaravati period (6th–11th centuries), the Sukhothai (13th–15th centuries) period, and the Ayutthaya period (14th–18th centuries).
- The Indian styles of the Amaravati and Gupta empires formed the basis of much of Dwaravati art, which produced both Hindu and Buddhist images, usually taking the form of monumental statues. The Sukhothai period witnessed the development of four classic postures of the Thai Buddha: walking, standing, sitting, and reclining. Later Thai art was highly influenced by Sukhothai images and continued to imitate these postures.
- Artists of the late Ayutthaya period usually depicted the Buddha in royal attire, set on ornate bases. Sculptures were often gilded, or decorated with gold leaf in free-form designs on lacquer backgrounds.

Key Terms

- **aureole**: Any luminous or colored ring that encircles something; often a circle of light or halo surrounding a deity.
- **yaksha**: A spirit that watches over the treasures hidden in the earth and tree roots.
- **Mon**: A people living primarily in Myanmar (also known as Burma) and Thailand; one of the earliest peoples to reside in Southeast Asia and who were responsible for the spread of Buddhism in Burma and Thailand.

Background: Traditional Thai Art

Traditional Thai art primarily consists of Buddhist art and, to a lesser extent, Hindu-influenced Thai folklore. From the 1st to the 7th centuries, art in Thailand was influenced by direct contact with Indian traders and the expansion of the Mon Kingdom, leading to the creation of Hindu and Buddhist art inspired by the Gupta tradition of India. Thai sculptures most often depict images of the Buddha and other characters from Buddhist and Hindu mythology, while Thai paintings comprise book illustrations and painted ornamentation of temples and palaces. The history of Buddhist sculpture in Thailand until the 18th century can be divided into three broad phases: the Dwaravati period, the Sukhothai period, and the Ayutthaya period.

Buddhist Sculpture in Thailand

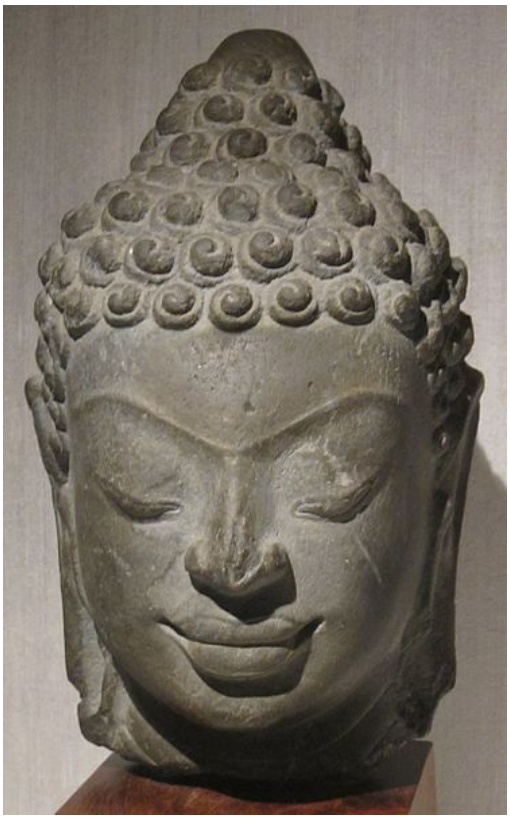
Dwaravati Period (6th–11th centuries)

The Indian styles of the Amaravati and Gupta empires formed the basis of much of Dwaravati art, which produced both Hindu and Buddhist images, usually taking the form of monumental statues. From the 9th century onward, Mahayana influences such as the Cambodian Khmer style in the north and the Sri Vijaya style in the south became more important. Dwaravati art came to represent the Mahayana pantheon , portraying multiple creations of Bodhisattvas , or enlightened beings.

Three important styles of portraying the Buddha emerged during the Dwaravati period:

1. Buddha in the Tribhanga (leaning) position, with Indian features and no aureole .
2. Buddha in the Amaravati style with loosely folded legs, a continuous eyebrow, flat nose, thick lips, and a lotus-shaped aureole.

3. A square-faced Buddha with a cleft chin, Khmer features, and fully folded legs, sitting on a lotus base.



Head of Buddha, Dvaravati Kingdom, 8th–9th Century: The continuous eyebrow and thick lips of this sculpture are characteristic of the Amaravati style patronized by Dwaravati.

Sukhothai Period (13th–15th centuries)

Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka arrived in Thailand for the first time the 13th century, at the same time that the Sukhothai kingdom was established in north-central Thailand. Theravada Buddhism had a considerable influence on Sukhothai art, which favored highly stylized images of the Buddha—images cast with the intention of depicting his superhuman traits and in keeping with his canonical defining marks, as set out in ancient Buddhist texts. Sukhothai Buddhas usually had finely curled hair, a slight smile, broad shoulders, and a slender oval face and were accompanied by a flame-shaped aureole. Small anatomical details were frequently omitted to emphasize the Buddha's spiritual aspects.

The Sukhothai period witnessed the development of four classic postures of the Thai Buddha: walking, standing, sitting, and reclining. Later Thai art was highly influenced by Sukhothai images and continued to imitate these postures.

Bronze Walking Buddha, Thailand, Sukhothai Kingdom, 15th Century: The Sukhothai period witnessed the development of Buddha images in a walking position.

Ayutthaya Period (14th–18th centuries)

Ayutthaya sculptures were executed in stone, bronze , and brick and stucco . The period was characterized by juxtaposed rows of Buddha figures. The influence of the Sukhothai period continued to loom large, particularly in bronze Buddha images, which were portrayed in Sukhothai poses. Artists of the late Ayutthaya period usually depicted the Buddha in royal attire, set on ornate bases. Sculptures were often gilded, or decorated with gold leaf in free-form designs on lacquer backgrounds.

Standing Buddha, Thailand, Ayutthaya kingdom, 16th Century: Gilded sculptures of the Buddha became popular during the Ayutthaya period.

Thai Painting

Thai painting traditionally took the form of book illustrations and ornamentation of temples and palaces.

Learning Objectives

Detail the components that are common to Thai painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While Thai sculptures most often depict images of the Buddha and other characters from Buddhist and Hindu mythology, Thai paintings traditionally comprised book illustrations and painted ornamentation of temples and palaces.
- Paintings of Thai Buddha from different periods have a number of distinctive styles , and contemporary Thai art often combines traditional Thai elements with modern techniques.
- Traditional Thai paintings show subjects in two dimensions without perspective , and the size of each element in the picture reflects its degree of importance.
- The most frequent themes for Thai painting are illustrations of the Jataka tales , events from the life of the Buddha, the Buddhist heavens and hells, and scenes from daily life.
- Paintings from the mid-19th century onward began to show the influence of Western art, for example, with the introduction of perspective.

Key Terms

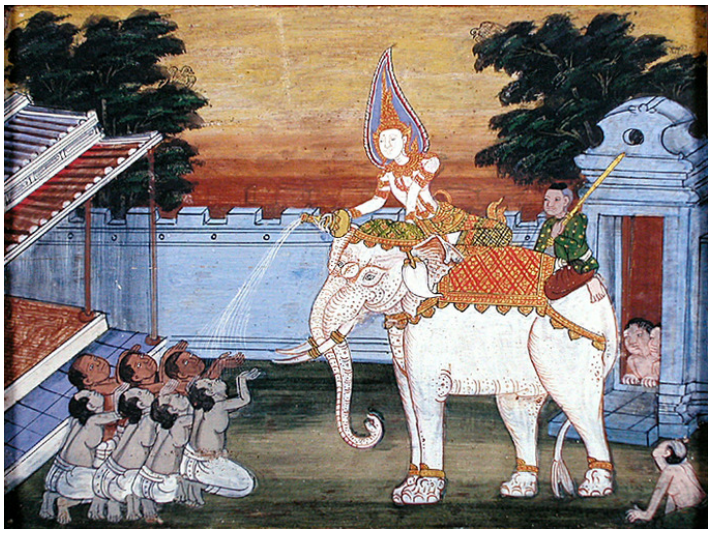
- **Jataka tales**: A voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births and lives of Gautama Buddha, in both human and animal form.
- **perspective**: In the graphic arts, an approximate representation on a flat surface (such as paper) of an image as it is seen by the eye: objects are smaller as their distance from the observer increases.

Overview

Traditional Thai art primarily consists of Buddhist art and, to a lesser extent, Hindu-influenced Thai folklore. While Thai sculptures most often depict images of the Buddha and other characters from Buddhist and Hindu mythology, Thai paintings traditionally comprised book illustrations and painted ornamentation of temples and palaces. Paintings of Thai Buddha from different periods have a number of distinctive styles, and contemporary Thai art often combines traditional Thai elements with modern techniques.

Themes of Thai Painting

Traditional Thai paintings show subjects in two dimensions without perspective. An important element in the composition is the apportioning of areas: the main elements in the image are isolated from one another by space transformers, which eliminate the intermediate ground that would otherwise imply perspective. The size of each element in the picture reflects its degree of importance. Perspective was introduced only as a result of Western influence in the mid-19th century.



Thai Painting of the 19th Century: A depiction of a white elephant in 19th century Thai art.

The most frequent themes for Thai painting are illustrations of the Jataka tales (a vast body of fables about the previous incarnations of the Buddha, both in human and animal form), events from the life of the Buddha, the Buddhist heavens and hells, and scenes from daily life. The paintings reflect a blend of Thai folklore and traditional Buddhist iconography .

Historical Progression

The Sukhothai period began in the 13th century in the Sukhothai kingdom and dominated through the 15th century. Painted images often consisted of decorations of gold leaf in free-form designs on a lacquer background. Images of Buddha during this period are elegant, with sinuous bodies and slender, oval faces. This style emphasized the spiritual aspect of the Buddha and tried to follow the canonical defining marks of a Buddha, as they are set out in ancient Pali texts:

Skin so smooth that dust cannot stick to it; Legs like a deer; Thighs like a banyan tree; Shoulders as massive as an elephant's head; Arms round like an elephant's trunk, and long enough to touch the knees; Hands like lotuses about to bloom; Fingertips turned back like petals; head like an egg; Hair like scorpion stingers; Chin like a mango stone; Nose like a parrot's beak; Earlobes lengthened by the earrings of royalty; Eyelashes like a cow's; Eyebrows like drawn bows.

Painting following the Sukhothai period was more elaborate, with Buddha images often depicted in royal attire. Paintings from the mid-19th century onward began to show the influence of Western art, such as the use of perspective.

Ramakien in Wat Phra Kaew: Hanuman on his chariot, a scene from the Ramakien in Wat Phra Kaew, Bangkok.

Thai Buddhist Architecture

The most common form of Buddhist architecture seen in Thailand is the *wat*, or monastery temple, which is characterized by multiple-tiered roofs.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of Buddhism on Thai architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- With few exceptions, a Thai temple usually consists of two parts: the *phuttawat*, the area dedicated to the Buddha, and the *sanghawat*, the living quarters of the Buddhist monks.
- Temples typically have two or three tiers, although royal temples may have four. The use of multiple roof tiers is more aesthetic than functional, as it has the effect of lightening the roof's massive appearance.
- Roofs of Thai temples are further decorated with finials known as *lamyong*, sculpted in a serpentine shape and resembling the feathers of Garuda, a mythical bird-like creature from Hindu and Buddhist mythology.

Key Terms

- **wat**: A buddhist temple in Thailand, Cambodia, or Laos.
- **finial**: Any decorative fitting at the peak of a gable, or on the top of a flagpole, fence post, or staircase newel post.

Buddhist Monastery Temples

The most common form of Buddhist architecture seen in Thailand is the *wat*, or monastery temple. Although wat architecture has seen many changes in Thailand in the course of history, and there are many differences in layout and style , most monasteries adhere to the same principles. With few exceptions, a Thai temple usually consists of two parts: the *phuttawat*, the area dedicated to the Buddha, and the *sanghawat*, the living quarters of the Buddhist monks.

Roof Forms

Multiple roof tiers are an important element of the Thai temple—a technique reserved only for the roofs of temples, palaces, and important public buildings. Temples typically have two or three tiers, although royal temples may have four. The use of multiple roof tiers is more aesthetic than functional. Because temple halls are large, their roof areas are also quite large, and multiple tiers have the effect of lightening the roof's massive appearance. The lowest tier is the largest, with a smaller middle layer and the smallest tier on top. Individual layers themselves have multiple breaks as well—a double-tiered roof might have two to four breaks in each tier, for example—that further lighten the effect and create dynamic visual rhythms.

In northern temples, the roof area tends to be larger, sweeping low toward the ground to cover more of the wall. The lower tiers telescope farther to the entrance. In central Thai temples, the lower tiers telescope just a short distance beyond the top roof at the gable ends.

Phra Maha Chedi Si Ratchakan at Wat Pho, Bangkok.: Thai Buddhist monasteries, or *wats*, are known for their elaborate tiered roofs.

Roof Finials

Roofs of Thai temples are typically decorated with finials attached to the bargeboard, the long, thin panel on the edge of the roof at the gable ends. The most common finial is called the *lamyong*, sculpted in a serpentine shape and resembling the feathers of Garuda, a mythical bird-like creature from Hindu and Buddhist mythology. The *lamyong* is surmounted by a large, curving ornament called the *chofah*, which represents the beak of Garuda. Temples may also be decorated with sculptures and paintings of other mythical beings from Hindu and Buddhist iconography , including the many-armed gods Vishnu and Shiva, the elephant god Ganesh, the *naga* or serpent deity , and the ghost-banishing giant Yaksha . A roof with multiple breaks or tiers will have identical finials at the bottom of each section.

Wat Phra Singh in Chiang Mai: The roofs of wats were commonly decorated with finials of mythical creatures.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Thai head of Buddha, Dvaravati kingdom, 8th-9th century, Dayton. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thai_head_of_Buddha,_Dvaravati_kingdom,_8th-9th_century,_Dayton.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d1/Tailandia,_ayutthaya,_buddha_stante,_1500-1600_ca..JPG/262px-Tailandia,_ayutthaya,_buddha_stante,_1500-1600_ca..JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bronze walking Buddha, Thailand, Sukhothai kingdom, 15th century, Honolulu Academy of Arts. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bronze_walking_Buddha,_Thailand,_Sukhothai_kingdom,_15th_century,_Honolulu_Academy_of_Arts.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Thai temple art and architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_temple_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddha images in Thailand. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddha_images_in_Thailand. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Eastern art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eastern_art%23Thai_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thai art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aureole. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aureole. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- finial. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/finial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- yaksha. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/yaksha. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- RoyalWhiteElephant.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art#/media/File:RoyalWhiteElephant.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-WatPhraKeaw_Ramayana_Chariot.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art#/media/File:WatPhraKeaw_Ramayana_Chariot.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Thai temple art and architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_temple_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thai Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Asian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Asian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 1024px-Thai-roof.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_temple_art_and_architecture#/media/File:Thai-roof.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-BOB_3205-3.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art#/media/File:BOB_3205-3.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thai Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Thai temple art and architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_temple_art_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.10: Thai Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.11: Burmese Art

Burmese Art

Burmese art has been influenced primarily by Theravada Buddhism, with additional influences from India, Thailand, and China.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the art and architecture of the Burmese Pyu culture, the Pagan Empire, the Innwa style of the Ava Kingdom, the Mandalay style of the Konbaung dynasty, and the Shan style

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Buddhist art and architecture first began to flourish in Burma under the Pyu city-states (2nd century BCE—mid-11th century CE). The Pyu imported Buddhism from India and built solid stupas that served as inspiration for later Burmese temples.
- Under the Pagan Empire (849–1297 CE), two types of Buddhist temples developed: the stupa- style solid temple and the gu-style hollow temple.
- Innovations in temple architecture of the Pagan period include pointed arches , vaulted chambers, and the pentagonal temple plan.
- There are three popular styles of Buddha images in Burma: the Ava style, the Mandalay style, and the Shan style.

Key Terms

- **mudra**: Any of several formal symbolic hand postures used in classical dance of India and in Hindu and Buddhist iconography.
- **jataka tales**: A voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births (jāti) of the Buddha, in both human and animal form.
- **pagoda**: An Asian religious building, especially a multistory Buddhist tower, erected as a shrine or temple.
- **bodhisattva**: In Buddhism, an enlightened being—existing beyond the Western scientific thought of physical reality—resembling the Western notion of angels but with a wealth of its own nuances and expectations.

Overview

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, also known as Burma, is a sovereign state in Southeast Asia bordered by Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, and Thailand. Both the names “Burma” and “Myanmar” are derived from the name of the *Bamar* ethnic group. The name Burma has been in use in English since the 18th century; however in 1989, the country’s military government officially changed the country’s name from Burma to Myanmar. The renaming remains a contested issue, and many political and ethnic opposition groups and countries continue to use “Burma” because they do not recognize the legitimacy of the ruling military government. Burma continues to be used in English by the governments of many countries, such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Official United States policy retains Burma as the country’s name, although both are sometimes used interchangeably.

Burmese art has been influenced primarily by Theravada Buddhism and the culture of the Mon people, with additional influences from India, Thailand, and China. Themes are commonly drawn from Buddhist and Hindu cosmology and myths. Burma is particularly renowned for its richness of Buddhist architecture, and is justifiably called “The Land of Pagodas ,” as Buddhist monasteries and gilded pagodas dot the landscape.

Background: Pyu Art

Buddhist art and architecture began to flourish in Burma under the Pyu city-states (2nd century BCE—mid-11th century CE). Pyu culture was heavily influenced by trade with India, and Buddhism was imported along with various Indian cultural and architectural concepts. While Theravada Buddhism was the primary religion of the Pyu kingdoms, archaeological finds indicate that Tantric Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Hinduism were also present. Figures from the Mahayana and Tantric pantheons

were represented in Pyu art, including Avalokiteshwara (a bodhisattva who embodies compassion) and Tara (a female Tantric meditation deity); Hindu deities, including the Hindu holy trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva; and the goddess Lakshmi.

Starting from the 4th century CE, the Pyu began to build stupas and other religious buildings. The styles, ground plans, and construction techniques used are very similar to those of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the Andhra region in present-day south-eastern India. By the 7th century, the tall cylindrical solid stupas, characteristic of the Pyu reign, had emerged in the city of Sri Ksetra. These solid stupas served as models for later pagodas.

The Pagan Dynasty (849–1297 CE)

The Pyu city-states declined in the early 9th century CE when a new group of ethnic Burmans from the north entered and raided their lands, establishing the Pagan dynasty and eventually overtaking the Pyu realm in the late 10th century. The Pagan state lasted from 849 until 1297 CE, laying the foundations for Burmese language and culture and the spread of Theravada Buddhism through all of Burma. The Pagan Empire is famous for its religious architecture: over 2,000 temples from the period survive to the present day. In addition to setting the model for subsequent Buddhist stupas and temples, the Pagan period also witnessed the production of beautiful jeweled statues of the Buddha.

Architecture during this time was built in two broad styles: the stupa-style solid temple inherited from the Pyu city-states, and the gu-style hollow temple.

Pagan plains today: A view of the stupas in Bagan (formerly Pagan), the capital of the Pagan Empire.

Stupa-style Temples

During the Pagan period, the stupa developed into a longer, more cylindrical form than its Pyu predecessors at Sri Ksetra. By the 11th century, it had assumed a bell-like form, surmounted by a series of increasingly smaller rings placed one on top of the other and rising to a point. A lotus or banana-bud topped these rings. Three or four rectangular terraces served as the base for a pagoda, often decorated by a gallery of terracotta tiles depicting the Jataka tales . One of the earliest examples of Pagan temple architecture is the Shwezigon Pagoda in Nyaung-U. It is considered a prototype of Burmese stupas and consisted of a bell-shaped goldleaf-gilded stupa surrounded by smaller temples and shrines.

Shwezigon pagoda: Completed in 1102 CE, this is one of the earliest examples of Pagan stupa-style Buddhist temples. It is marked by a solid, bell-shaped stupa.

Gu-style Temples

The hollow gu-style temple comes in two basic styles: the one-face design with one main entrance, and the four-face design with four main entrances. The primary features of these temples are pointed arches and vaulted chambers, both of which became larger and grander during the Pagan period. Vaulting was an innovation that developed independently in Pagan itself around the 11th century, and the masonry of these vaulted buildings is astonishingly perfect and durable. Another architectural innovation arising in Pagan is the Buddhist temple with the pentagonal floor in order to honor the Maitreya Buddha, a future Buddha foretold of in Buddhist mythology.

Later Kingdoms

The Pagan Empire was succeeded by the Ava Kingdom, which ruled Upper Burma from 1364 to 1555 CE. Ava rule was marked by the popularization of the Innwa style of Buddha, in which the Buddha is depicted with large protruding ears, exaggerated eyebrows that curve upward, half-closed eyes, thin lips, and a hair bun that is pointed at the top. Ava statues of the Buddha are also usually portrayed in the *bhumisparsha mudra* , in which the figure is seated with the right hand reaching for the ground, palm facing inward.

The Innwa style continued to be popular in Burma until the end of the 18th century, when a markedly new style of Buddha image, the Mandalay style, emerged under the Konbaung dynasty (1752–1885). The face of the Buddha in the Mandalay style was natural and fleshy with realistically slanted eyebrows, slightly slanted eyes, thicker lips, and a round hair bun. These statues were portrayed wearing flowing, draped robes. Three postures were commonly depicted: reclining, standing, or sitting. Another common style of the Buddha image is the Shan style, inherited from the Shan people who inhabit the highlands of Burma. Buddhas in the Shan style have angular features, large and prominently-pointed noses, and small, thin mouths.

Mandalay-style Buddha statue, Shwedagon pagoda, Yangon, Myammar: This gilded statue of the Buddha has naturally slanted brows, slanted eyes, and a round hair bun characteristic of the Mandalay style.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Buddha 00004. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Buddha_00004.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shwezigon Pagoda. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shwezigon_Pagoda. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bagan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagan. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shwezigon Pagoda. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shwezigon_Pagoda. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pagodas in Burma. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagodas_in_Burma. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Burma. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Burma. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pyu city-states. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyu_city-states. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pagan Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagan_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/jataka-tales. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pagoda. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pagoda. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mudra. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mudra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- bodhisattva. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bodhisattva. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Myanmar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.11: Burmese Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.12: Vietnamese Art

Champa Art in Early Vietnam

Champa art and architecture in Vietnam was been formed by the interaction of local customs with Indian, Chinese, and Indonesian influences.

Learning Objectives

Describe the art and architecture of the Indic kingdom of Champa

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Vietnamese art and architecture has a long, rich history and has been shaped by the interaction of local customs with foreign cultures . The Indic kingdom of Champa produced strongly Indianized Hindu-Buddhist art, with additional influences from Cambodia, China, and Java.
- Champa was an Indic civilization that flourished along the coasts of central and southern Vietnam between 500 and 1500 CE, lying on important trade routes that linked India, China, and the Indonesian islands.
- The artistic legacy of Champa consists of sandstone sculptures , both free-standing and in relief , and brick temples. Cham art and architecture synthesized themes from Hinduism , Buddhism , and different indigenous cults.
- The art and architecture of Champa reached its peak between the 7th and 10th centuries, after which it fell into a state of gradual decline. Worn out by external conflict, the kingdom fell in 1471 CE.

Key Terms

- **relief**: A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.

Overview: The Art of Vietnam

Vietnamese art and architecture has a long, rich history and has been shaped by the interaction of local customs with foreign cultures. While the art of Northern Vietnam was strongly influenced by Chinese domination and reflected Confucian and Mahayana Buddhist traditions, southern and central Vietnam were a part of the Indic kingdom of Champa (ca. 500–1500 CE). This region produced strongly Indianized Hindu-Buddhist art, with additional influences from Cambodia, China, and Java.

The Art of Champa

Champa was an Indic civilization that flourished along the coasts of central and southern Vietnam between 500 and 1500 CE, lying on important trade routes that linked India, China, and the Indonesian islands. The artistic legacy of Champa consists primarily of sandstone sculptures, both freestanding and in relief, and brick buildings. Most of the surviving art expresses religious themes, synthesized from Hinduism, Buddhism, and different indigenous cults.

The art and architecture of Champa reached its peak between the 7th and 10th centuries, after which it fell into a state of gradual decline. The civilization weakened under persistent conflict with external forces, culminating in 1471 CE with the conquest and obliteration of the capital Vijaya by the Đi Việt of northern Vietnam.

Champa Temples

The Cham built their temples from red brick. Temple complexes usually consisted of several parts: the *kalan* or sanctuary , usually in the form of a tower and used to house the deity ; the *mandapa* or entry hallway; the *kosagrha* or fire-house, used to house the temple's valuables and to cook for the deity; and the *gopura* or gate-tower leading into the walled templed complex. This structure was typical for Hindu temples in general, not just in Champa but across Greater India. Some of the most significant temples of historical Champa include the temple of Yan Po Nagar outside of Nha Trong, dedicated to the Hindu goddess Bhagavati and built between the 8th and 13th centuries, and Po Klaung Garai near Phanh Rang.

Temple of Po Klaung Garai, Phanh Rang, Vietnam: The profile of this 13th century temple includes all the buildings typical of a Cham temple. From left to right one can see the kalan, the attached mandapa, the saddle-shaped kosgrha, and the gopura.

Champa Sculptures

The Cham were famous for both their freestanding sandstone statues and their relief carvings, with some preference for the latter. The subject matter was mostly drawn from the legends and religious traditions of India, and the sculptures feature Hindu and Buddhist deities, such as Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti (the divine feminine creative power in Hinduism), and Avalokiteshwara (the bodhisattva of compassion).

Cham sculptors also erected numerous *lingas*, or phallic posts connected with Shiva, and created some images that depart from Indian subject matter to reveal something of the lives and customs of the Cham. A few bronze sculptures and metal decorative items remain as well, dating from the 10th century CE. These include statues of Mahayana Buddhist deities such as Avalokiteshwara and Tara (a Buddhist female meditation deity), and bear a strong resemblance to the Indian Buddhist style of Amaravati.

The Dancers' Pedestal of Tra Kieu: 10th century Cham sculpture, sandstone. The figures are a dancing apsara (Hindu celestial nymph) and a gandharva (Hindu male nature spirit) musician.

Chinese Influences in Vietnamese Art

Northern Vietnamese art and architecture was highly influenced by over a century of Chinese domination.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the influence of Chinese culture on Vietnamese art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The art of Northern Vietnam was strongly influenced by Chinese domination (111 BCE—939 CE), reflecting Confucian and Mahayana Buddhist traditions.
- During the millennium of Chinese domination, artists in the north of Vietnam began to apply newly learned Chinese techniques to art in conjunction with traditional indigenous methods, including advanced bronze-casting.
- The period of rule under the Lý Dynasty (1009–1225) is commonly considered a golden age in Vietnamese art, and its ceramics became famous across Southeast Asia and the Far East.
- Vietnam was conquered and ruled by the Ming Dynasty of China between 1407 and 1427 CE; during this period, many classical Vietnamese books were burned under an extreme process of sinicization .

Key Terms

- **sinicization**: To make Chinese in character or to change or modify by Chinese influence.

Overview

Vietnamese art and architecture has a long, rich history and has been shaped by the interaction of local customs with foreign cultures . Unlike the Champa art of southern and central Vietnam, the art of Northern Vietnam was strongly influenced by Chinese domination (2nd century BCE—10th century CE) and reflected Confucian and Mahayana Buddhist traditions.

The Art of Northern Vietnam

Early Chinese Domination

During the millennium of Chinese domination (111 BCE–939 CE), artists in the north of Vietnam began to apply newly learned Chinese techniques to art, specifically ceramics, in conjunction with art created using traditional indigenous methods, including advanced bronze-casting. Chinese-influenced philosophies such as Confucianism , Mahayana Buddhism , and Taoism left lasting impressions on Vietnamese culture and art, which continued to flourish between the 10th and 15th centuries after Chinese dominance had waned. However, the ceramics from this period were considerably influenced by the Tang and Song dynasties of China.

The Lý Dynasty

The period of rule under the Lý Dynasty (1009–1225 CE) is commonly considered a golden age in Vietnamese art, and its ceramics became famous across Southeast Asia and the Far East. Many Vietnamese landmarks were constructed during this period. The One Pillar Pagoda , for example, was built in 1049 and is widely regarded as one of Vietnam's most iconic Buddhist temples. The Temple of Literature is a Confucian temple in Hanoi, built in 1070 and reconstructed between 1225—1400, that housed the Imperial Academy, Vietnam's first national university. The temple layout is similar to that of the temple at Qufu, Shandong, Confuscius' birthplace. It covers an area of over 54,000 square meters, including the surrounding Lake of Literature, a park, and the interior courtyards, which are enclosed by a brick wall. In front of the Great Gate are four tall pillars, and on either side of the pillars are two *stelae*, or stone tablets commanding horsemen to dismount.

Temple of Literature, Main Gate, Hanoi: Built in 1070, this Confucian temple is one of the greatest Vietnamese landmarks constructed during the Lý Dynasty.

The Ming and Subsequent Dynasties

Vietnam was conquered and ruled by the Ming Dynasty of China between 1407 and 1427 CE. This period of Chinese domination was extremely harsh, and many classical Vietnamese books were burned as an extreme process of sinicization was enforced. Consequently, the art of this period was heavily influenced by the Ming Dynasty, a process that continued even after the liberation of Vietnam by the Lê Dynasty (1428–1788). The Nguyễn Dynasty, the last ruling dynasty of Vietnam, witnessed a renewed interest in ceramics and porcelain , which became famous and were imported to imperial courts across Asia.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Art of Champa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Champa. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Apsara Gandharva Dancer Pedestal Tra Kieu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Apsara_Gandharva_Dancer_Pedestal_Tra_Kieu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vietnamese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of Champa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_Champa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art%23Vietnam. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/sinicization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- le-of-literature-main-gate.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Literature,_Hanoi. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vietnamese Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhist Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art%23Vietnam. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.12: Vietnamese Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

22.13: Indonesian Art

Indonesian Architecture

Indonesian architecture has been shaped by interaction between indigenous customs and foreign influences, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the developments of the golden age of Indonesian architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Indonesia has a particularly rich tradition of Hindu–Buddhist sculpture and architecture, and it was strongly influenced by India from the 1st century CE onward.
- Buddhist art in Indonesia reached its golden era under the Sailendra dynasty of the Sri Vijaya Empire between the 8th and 13th centuries.
- Sculpture flourished between the 8th and 10th centuries AD in Java and Bali, taking the form of free-standing statues or relief sculptures incorporated into temples. They are characterized by their delicacy and serenity of expression.
- Indonesian art enjoyed another golden age under the Majapahit Empire (1293–1500), during which a large number of Hindu–Buddhist brick temples were built, characterized by tall, slender-roofed red brick gates and a strong geometrical quality.
- By the 15th century, Islam had become the dominant religion in Indonesia, and local mosques reflected both indigenous and Islamic influences. They lacked the Islamic dome and had tall timber -tiered roofs similar to the pagodas of Balinese Hindu temples.

Key Terms

- **animism**: A belief that spirits inhabit some or all classes of natural objects or phenomena.
- **mandala**: Any ritualistic geometric design, symbolic of the universe, used as an aid to meditation, particularly in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- **syncretism**: The reconciliation or fusion of different systems or beliefs (or the attempt at such fusion).
- **candi**: Hindu and Buddhist temples and sanctuaries of Indonesia, mostly built during the 8th to 15th centuries; however, ancient non-religious structures such as gates, urban ruins, and bathing places are often also called by this name.

Overview: Indonesia

The culture and art of Indonesia has been shaped by interaction between local indigenous customs and multiple foreign influences. Situated on the ancient maritime trading routes between the Near East and the Far East, Indonesia was exposed to a multitude of foreign cultural practices and religions, including Hinduism , Buddhism , and Islam. The result is a complex fusion of many different customs, expressed in Indian art forms.

Architecture in Indonesia before 1200 CE

The Sri Vijaya Empire

Indonesia has a particularly rich tradition of Hindu–Buddhist sculpture and architecture, which was strongly influenced by India from the 1st century CE onward. The earliest Buddhist structures in Indonesia to survive to the present day are the 4th century Batujaya plastered brick stupas in West Java. However, Buddhist art reached its golden era under the Sailendra dynasty of the Sri Vijaya Empire. The islands of Sumatra and Java in western Indonesia were the seat of the Sri Vijaya Empire (8th–13th centuries), which practiced Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism and were a major political and cultural influence in the Southeast Asian peninsula.

Bronze Maitreya statue, South Sumatra, Indonesia, c. 9th–10th century.: This bronze Bodhisattva Maitreya is an example of Sri Vijayan sculpture. The statue's distinctive crown incorporates a stupa in its design.

Stone and bronze sculpture flourished between the 8th and 10th century CE under the Sailendra dynasty in Java and Bali. These sculptures were either free-standing statues or relief sculptures and friezes incorporated into temples; they are characterized by their delicacy and serenity of expression.

Borobudur

The most outstanding example of this classical Hindu–Buddhist sculpture in Indonesia is found in the temple of Borobudur in central Java. Built in the 8th century, Borobudur is the largest Buddhist temple in the world and is supposed to represent a map of the Buddhist cosmos; it is a masterful combination of didactic narrative sculptures, spiritual symbolism , monumental design, and meditative serenity. The entire structure resembles a stupa, and when seen from above, looks like a *mandala* , a concentric diagram with spiritual significance in Buddhism. As part of its structure, it has 504 statues of the Buddha and 2,672 relief panels depicting the life of the Buddha. As a visitor ascends through the eight levels of the temple, the story unfolds from beginning to end. The last three levels simply contain stupas and statues of the Buddha.

Borobudur's main stupa, Java, Indonesia.: This image shows the main Stupa crowning the Borobudur, built in the 8th century by the Sailendra dynasty. The uppermost terrace has rows of bell-shaped stupas and Buddha images. The main stupa itself is empty, symbolizing perfect enlightenment.

Prambanan

Near Borobudur is the 9th century temple complex of Prambanan, one of the oldest and largest Hindu temples in Southeast Asia. The complex consists of eight main shrines, surrounded by 224 smaller ones. The Indian influence on the building is unmistakable, not only in the architectural style but also in the stone reliefs featuring scenes from the Hindu epic Ramayana, which adorn the outer walls of the main temples.

Architecture in Indonesia after 1200 CE

The Majapahit Empire

The decline of the Sri Vijaya Empire in the 11th century was accompanied by a corresponding decline in Buddhism and a shift of power to Eastern Java. The Majapahit Empire was established in 1293 and lasted until around 1500. The Majapahit rulers practiced a mix of Hinduism, Buddhism, and animism , and the religious architecture reflects this synthesis. Indonesian art enjoyed a golden age under Majapahit rule, and an enormous number of Hindu–Buddhist temples, or *candi*, were built during this period. The building material of choice was brick and mortar of vine sap and palm sugar. Majapahit architecture is characterized by tall and slender roofed red brick gates, a strong geometrical quality, and a sense of verticality, achieved through numerous horizontal lines . Majapahit influence can still be seen to the present day in Hindu temples in Bali.

Introduction of Islam

By the 15th century, Islam had become the dominant religion in Java and Sumatra, Indonesia's most populous islands. Islamic cultural and artistic influences were absorbed and reinterpreted in the local landscape, resulting in mosques that reflected both Indonesian and Islamic background, with additional influences from Hindu, Buddhist, and Chinese architecture. Indonesian mosques lacked the ubiquitous Islamic dome until the 19th century, and they had tall timber tiered roofs similar to the pagodas of Balinese Hindu temples.

Indonesian Painting

Indonesian painting has been shaped by a myriad of cultural influences, including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and colonial forces.

Learning Objectives

Examine the characteristics of Indonesian painting during its golden age

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Indonesian art has been shaped by interaction between indigenous customs and foreign influences, including Hinduism , Buddhism , and Islam .
- Indonesian painting before the 19th century was mostly restricted to the decorative arts, considered to be a religious and spiritual activity.
- Notable artwork includes the mural paintings on the long houses of the Kenyah people of Borneo , which are based on endemic natural motifs such as ferns and hornbills.
- A tradition of Balinese painting uses narrative imagery to depict scenes from Balinese legends and religious scripts; these paintings can usually found in Indonesian palm-leaf manuscripts and on the ceilings of Balinese temples.
- Under the influence of the Dutch colonial power, a trend toward Western- style painting emerged in the 19th century.
- The most famous indigenous 19th century Indonesian painter is Raden Saleh (1807–1877), who was the first indigenous artist to study in Europe and was heavily influenced by Romanticism .

Key Terms

- **Borneo**: The third-largest island in the world and the largest island in Asia.
- **Raden Saleh**: A pioneering Indonesian Romantic painter of Arab-Javanese ethnicity; he was considered to be the first “modern” artist from Indonesia (then Dutch East Indies), and his paintings corresponded with 19th century romanticism, which was popular in Europe at the time.

Overview: Art in Indonesia

The art and culture of Indonesia have been shaped by interactions between original indigenous customs and multiple foreign influences. Indonesia is centrally located along ancient trading routes between the Far East, South Asia, and the Middle East, resulting in art and paintings that are strongly influenced by a multitude of religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism , Islam, and Christianity.

Indonesian Painting Before the 19th Century

Indonesian painting before the 19th century was mostly restricted to the decorative arts, considered to be a religious and spiritual activity. Artists’ names were often anonymous, as the individual human creator was seen as far less important than his creation to honor the deities or spirits. Notable artwork includes the mural paintings on the long houses of the Kenyah people of Borneo, which are based on endemic natural motifs such as ferns and hornbills. Other traditional art includes the geometric wood carvings of the Toraja people of South Sulawesi.

Kenyah mural paintings: Kenyah mural painting in Long Nawang, East Kalimantan.

There is a tradition of Balinese painting that uses narrative imagery to depict scenes from Balinese legends and religious scripts. These classical paintings can usually be found in Indonesian lontar or palm-leaf manuscripts and on the ceilings of Balinese temples.

Indonesian Painting After the 19th Century

Under the influence of the Dutch colonial power, a trend toward Western style painting emerged in the 19th century. In the Netherlands, the term “Indonesian Painting” is often applied to the paintings produced by Dutch or other foreign artists who lived and worked in the former Netherlands-Indies. The most famous indigenous 19th century Indonesian painter is Raden Saleh (1807–1877), who was also the first indigenous artist to study in Europe. His art is heavily influenced by Romanticism.

The Arrest of Pangeran Diponegoro by Raden Saleh: Raden Saleh was perhaps the most famous indigenous 19th century Indonesian painter, and his work is heavily influenced by Romanticism and his training in Europe.

The 1920s to 1940s was a time of growing nationalism in Indonesia. The previous period of romanticism was not seen as a purely Indonesian movement and began to wane, and painters began to turn to the natural world for inspiration. Some examples of Indonesian painters during this period are the Balinese Ida Bagus Made and the realist Basuki Abdullah. The Indonesian Painters Association (or PERSAGI, 1938–1942) was formed during this period and established a contemporary art philosophy that saw art as a reflection of the artist’s individual views, as well as an expression of national cultural thoughts. During the 1960s, new elements were added when abstract expressionism and Islamic art began to be absorbed by the art community. The national identity of Indonesia was stressed by painters through the use of a realistic, documentary style.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Stupa Borobudur. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stupa_Borobudur.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sri Vijaya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Vijaya. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Buddhist art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indonesian architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Indonesia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Indonesia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Majapahit empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Majapahit_empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mandala. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mandala. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- syncretism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/syncretism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- animism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/animism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- candi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/candi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kenyah_mural_painting.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kenyah_mural_painting.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Raden_Saleh_-_Diponegoro_arrest.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Indonesia#/media/File:Raden_Saleh_-_Diponegoro_arrest.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Arrest of Pangeran Diponegoro. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Arrest_of_Pangeran_Diponegoro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Indonesia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Indonesia#Traditional_visual_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Raden Saleh. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Raden_Saleh. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Borneo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Borneo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 22.13: Indonesian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

23: Chinese and Korean Art Before 1279 CE

23.1: The Middle Kingdom
23.2: The Neolithic Age
23.3: The Bronze Age
23.4: The Qin Dynasty
23.5: The Han Dynasty
23.6: The Six Dynasties Period
23.7: The Tang Dynasty
23.8: The Song Dynasty
23.9: Korea

This page titled 23: Chinese and Korean Art Before 1279 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.1: The Middle Kingdom

Art of the Middle Kingdom

The art of China, once known as the Middle Kingdom, arguably has the oldest continuous tradition in the world.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the painting, sculpture, pottery, and decorative arts of the Middle Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The decorative arts are extremely important in Chinese culture, and much of the finest work was produced in large workshops or factories by essentially unknown artists.
- Most of the best ceramics and textiles were produced by Imperial factories and distributed on a massive scale to demonstrate the wealth and power of the emperors.
- The two main techniques in Chinese painting are *Gong-bi* (meaning “meticulous” and using highly detailed brushstrokes for precise details) and *ink and wash painting* (watercolor or brush painting).
- Artists from the Han (202 BCE) to the Tang (618–906 CE) dynasties primarily painted the human figure, while the time from the Five Dynasties period to the Northern Song period (907–1128 CE) is known as the great age of Chinese landscape.
- Chinese ritual bronzes from the Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties still exert an influence over Chinese art.
- Large religious sculpture is primarily Buddhist, dating from the 4th to the 14th century.

Key Terms

- **zoomorphic**: Having the shape, form, or likeness of an animal.
- **Silk Road**: An extensive interconnected network of trade routes across Asia, North and Northeast Africa, and Europe, historically used by silk traders.
- **Confucius**: Western name of Kong Qiu (孔), an influential Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 – 479 BCE.

Overview: Art in China

In China, the group of states in the central plain was commonly called Zhōngguó (中) and Zhōnghuá (中). In the 19th century the term meaning ” Middle Kingdom ” emerged as the formal name of the country. The Chinese were not unique in regarding their country as “central”, as many civilizations have had this view.

Chinese art has arguably the oldest continuous tradition in the world, marked by an unusual degree of continuity within and consciousness of that tradition. This is a departure from the Western collapse and gradual recovery of classical styles . The decorative arts are extremely important in China, and much of the finest work was produced in large workshops or factories by essentially unknown artists. Much of the best work in ceramics, textiles, and other techniques was produced over a long period by the various Imperial factories or workshops, which was used by the court as well as distributed internally and abroad on a massive scale to demonstrate the wealth and power of the Emperors. In contrast , ink wash painting developed aesthetic values depending on the imagination of the artist, similar to and predating the art traditions of the West.

Painting

Traditional Chinses painting involves similar techniques to calligraphy, using a brush dipped in black or colored ink painted on paper or silk. The finished work can be mounted on hanging scrolls or handscrolls. Traditional painting was also done on album sheets, walls, lacquerware , folding screens, and other media .

Techniques

The two main techniques in Chinese painting are *Gong-bi* (meaning “meticulous” and using highly detailed brushstrokes that delimit details very precisely) and *ink and wash painting* (watercolor or brush painting). Artists from the Han (202 BCE) to the Tang (618–906 CE) dynasties primarily painted the human figure. Much known of early Chinese figure painting comes from burial

sites, where paintings were preserved on silk banners, lacquered objects, and tomb walls. Early tomb paintings were meant to protect the dead or help their souls get to paradise; others illustrated the teachings of Confucius or depicted scenes of daily life.

The Five Dynasties period to the Northern Song period (907–1128 CE) is known as the *"great age of Chinese landscape"*. In the north, artists such as Jing Hao, Li Cheng , Fan Kuan, and Guo Xi painted pictures of towering mountains using strong black lines , ink wash, and sharp, dotted brushstrokes to suggest rough stone. In the south, Dong Yuan, Juran, and other artists painted the rolling hills and rivers of their native countryside in peaceful scenes with softer, rubbed brushwork. These became the classical styles of Chinese landscape painting.

Dong Yuan, *Xiao and Xiang Rivers.* 10th century: Dong Yuan painted the rolling hills and rivers of his native countryside using soft, rubbed brushwork.

A Solitary Temple Amid Clearing Peaks (晴), Li Cheng (c. 919 – c. 967 CE): Li Cheng was among the great landscape painters from northern China.

Sculpture

Chinese ritual bronzes from the Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties still exert an influence over Chinese art. Many are cast with complex patterned and zoomorphic decoration. The spectacular Terracotta Army was assembled for the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of a unified China from 221–210 BCE, to enable the deceased to enjoy the same lifestyle in the afterlife. Smaller figures in pottery or wood were placed in tombs for centuries afterwards, peaking in quality in the Tang Dynasty.

Crossbow men from the Terracotta Army, interred by 210 BCE, Qin Dynasty: The spectacular Terracotta Army was assembled for the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of a unified China from 221–210 BCE.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Xiao and Xiang rivers. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xiao_and_Xiang_rivers.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Armee d'argile 03. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Armee_d'argile_03.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Li Cheng,temple boudhiste dans les montagnes. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Li_Cheng,temple_boudhiste_dans_les_montagnes.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of China. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_China. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- China. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/China. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Confucius. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Confucius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- zoomorphic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/zoomorphic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Silk Road. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Silk_Road. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.1: The Middle Kingdom is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.2: The Neolithic Age

Ceramics in Neolithic China

Painted pottery emerged during the Neolithic period of the Yangshao and Longshan cultures.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the pottery of the Yangshao and Longshan cultures of the Neolithic era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ceramics began in China during the New Stone Age in the period of the Yangshao and Longshan cultures .
- The earliest earthenware of the Yangshao culture was molded by hand. The potter's wheel was invented much later during the Longshan culture.
- Yangshao artisans created fine white, red, and black painted pottery with human facial, animal, and geometric designs.
- The Longshan culture was known for its polished black pottery created with excellent skill.

Key Terms

- **Neolithic**: Also known as the New Stone Age, a period in the development of human technology beginning from 10,200-8500 BCE and ending around between 4500 and 2000 BCE, depending on the part of the world.

Background

The invention of pottery and ceramics marked the advent of the New Stone Age in China around 6,000 years ago. The earliest earthenware was molded with clay by hand and fired at a temperature of about 500-600 degrees Celsius. Painted pottery emerged during the Yangshao and Longshan cultures.

Yangshao

The Yangshao was a Neolithic culture that existed extensively along the central Yellow River in China from around 5000 BCE to 3000 BCE. These people flourished mainly in the provinces of Henan, Shaanxi, and Shanxi.

Yangshao artisans created fine white, red, and black painted pottery with human faces, animals, and geometric designs. Unlike the later Longshan culture, the Yangshao culture did not use pottery wheels. Excavations found the bodies of children buried in painted pottery jars.

Yangshao Bowl: Human-faced fish decoration bowl, 5000-4000 BCE, from Banpo Village, Shaanxi.

Longshan

The Longshan were a late Neolithic culture in China, centered in the central and lower Yellow River. They existed just after the Yangshao culture, from about 3000 BCE to 2000 BCE.

The Longshan culture was distinguished by its advanced pottery skills, including the use of pottery wheels. This culture's most noted creation is highly polished, black pottery, also known as eggshell pottery because of its thin walls. Eggshell pottery has also been discovered in the Yangzi River valley and as far as the southeastern coast of modern China, a clear indication that Neolithic agricultural subgroups of the greater Longshan culture spread across the ancient boundaries of China.

Longshan Pottery: Black eggshell pottery of the Longshan culture.

The Neolithic population in China reached its peak during the Longshan culture. Toward the end of the era, the population decreased sharply; this was matched by the disappearance of high-quality black pottery in ritual burials.

Jade in Neolithic China

Jade has been used in virtually all periods of Chinese history. The earliest jades of the Neolithic Period were often quite simple and without ornamentation.

Learning Objectives

Describe the jade work and religious architecture of the Liangzhu culture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During Neolithic times, the known sources of nephrite jade in China were the Ningshao area in the Yangtze River Delta (during the Liangzhu culture , 3400–2250 BCE) and in the Liaoning province in Inner Mongolia (during the Hongshan culture, 4700–2200 BCE).
- Jade was used to create many utilitarian and ceremonial objects from indoor decorative items to jade burial suits, reflecting the ancient Chinese belief that jades would confer immortality or prolong life and prevent decay.
- The *bi* (a circular disc with a hole) and *cong* (a vessel that is square on the outside and circular on the inside) are only found in jade from early periods and are thought to have had religious or cosmic significance.
- The Liangzhu culture was the last Neolithic jade culture in the Yangtze River Delta of China. Liangzhu jade is characterized by large, finely worked ritual jades, commonly incised with the taotie motif .

Key Terms

- **Taotie**: A motif commonly found on Chinese ritual bronze vessels from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, typically consisting of a frontal, bilaterally symmetrical zoomorphic mask with a pair of raised eyes and no lower jaw area.

Jade has been used in virtually all periods of Chinese history and generally accords with the characteristic decorative style of each period. The earliest jades of the Neolithic Period are often quite simple and unornamented, used as ritual or decorative versions of the tools and weapons in ordinary use. These are presumed to have been symbols of political power or possibly religious authority.

Sources of Jade

During Neolithic times, the known sources of nephrite jade in China for utilitarian and ceremonial items were the now-depleted deposits in the Ningshao area in the Yangtze River Delta (during the Liangzhu culture, 3400–2250 BCE) and in an area of the Liaoning province in Inner Mongolia (during the Hongshan culture, 4700–2200 BCE). As early as 6000 BCE, Dushan Jade, a jade substitute found near Mount Du, has also been mined. In the Yin Ruins of the Shang Dynasty in Anyang, Dushan Jade ornaments were unearthed in the tombs of the Shang kings.

Jade Objects

Jade was used to create utilitarian and ceremonial objects ranging from indoor decorative items to jade burial suits, reflecting the ancient Chinese belief that jades would confer immortality or prolong life and prevent decay. The *bi* and *cong* are objects only found in jade in early periods, thought to have had religious or cosmic significance. The *bi* is a circular disk with a hole, originally plain but increasingly decorated over time, and the *cong* is a vessel that's square on the outside but circular on the inside. In later literature, the *cong* represents the earth and the *bi* represents the sky.

Neolithic *cong*, 3rd millennium BCE: The cong is a Chinese jade vessel, square on the outside but circular on the inside.

Jade in the Liangzhu Culture

The Liangzhu culture (3400-2250 BCE) was the last Neolithic jade culture in the Yangtze River Delta of China. Its influence extended from around Lake Tai north to Nanjing and the Chang Jiang, east to Shanghai and the sea, and south to Hangzhou. The culture was highly stratified , as jade, silk, ivory , and lacquer artifacts were found exclusively in elite burials, while simple pottery was more commonly found in the plots of common individuals. The site at Liangzhu was discovered in Yuhang County, Zhejiang, and initially excavated by Shi Xingeng in 1936.

Liangzhu Jade

The jade from this culture is characterized by large, finely worked ritual jades, commonly incised with the *taotie* motif. The most exemplary artifacts from the culture were its *cong* (cylinders, the largest of which weighs 3.5 kg), *bi* (discs) and *Yue axes* (ceremonial axes). Jade pendants found were engraved with representations of small birds, turtles, and fish. Many Liangzhu jade artifacts had a white, milky, bone-like aspect due to their tremolite rock origin and the influence of water-based fluids at burial sites, although jade made from actinolite and serpentine were also common.

Liangzhu Jade Bi: Jade bi from the Liangzhu culture; the ritual object is a symbol of wealth and military power.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- CMOC Treasures of Ancient China exhibit - black pottery goblet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_black_pottery_goblet.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Banpo bowl. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Banpo_bowl.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Adventist Youth Honors Answer Book/Arts and Crafts/Ceramics (General Conference). **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Adventist_Youth_Honors_Answer_Book/Arts_and_Crafts/Ceramics_(General_Conference). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Longshan culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Longshan_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yangshao. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangshao. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neolithic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Neolithic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Chinese_-_Cong_-_Walters_42340_-_Profile.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_jade#/media/File:Chinese_-_Cong_-_Walters_42340_-_Profile.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- CMOC Treasures of Ancient China exhibit - jade disk. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_jade_disk.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese Jade. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_jade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Liangzhu culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Liangzhu_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Taotie. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Taotie. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.2: The Neolithic Age is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.3: The Bronze Age

Ceramics and Bronze in the Shang Dynasty

The artwork of the Shang dynasty, notably bronze pieces, has been discovered through archaeological excavations.

Learning Objectives

Describe the advancements of bronze casting and pottery during the Shang dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Shang Dynasty ruled in the Yellow River Valley during the second millennium BCE.
- Tens of thousands of bronze , jade , stone, bone, and ceramic artifacts have been obtained from the Ruins of Yin and other excavation sites, providing a great deal of insight into Shang culture and artwork.
- While many Shang royal tombs have been raided, bronze vessels , stoneware and pottery vessels, bronze weapons, jade figures, hair combs, and bone hair pins were found at the intact Tomb 5 at Yinxu.
- Chinese bronze casting and pottery both advanced during the Shang dynasty, with bronze commonly used for art rather than weapons.
- As far back as 1500 BCE, the early Shang Dynasty engaged in large-scale production of bronze vessels and weapons.

Key Terms

- **piece-mold**: A method of casting in which the object is first designed as a model and then enclosed in a clay mold that can be cut into pieces for removal from the model.
- **oracle bones**: Pieces of ox scapula or turtle plastron used for pyromancy – a form of divination – in ancient China, mainly during the late Shang dynasty.
- **bronze**: A natural or man-made alloy of copper, usually of tin with one or more other metals.

Overview: Shang Dynasty

The Shang Dynasty, also known as the Yin Dynasty according to traditional historiography, ruled in the Yellow River valley in the second millennium BCE. The Shang are estimated to have succeeded the previous Xia Dynasty from circa 1766-1556 BCE and ruled until the following Zhou Dynasty circa 1122-1046 BCE.

Artifacts from the Shang Dynasty

The artwork of the Shang Dynasty has been discovered through numerous archaeological digs. In particular, excavation work at the Ruins of Yin, identified as the last Shang capital , uncovered eleven major Yin royal tombs and the foundations of palaces and ritual sites containing weapons of war and the remains from animal and human sacrifices . Tens of thousands of bronze, jade, stone, bone, and ceramic artifacts have been obtained. The workmanship on the bronze attests to a high level of civilization .

Many Shang royal tombs were ravaged by grave robbers in ancient times; however, in the spring of 1976, the discovery of Tomb 5 at Yinxu revealed a tomb that was not only undisturbed, but one of the most richly furnished Shang tombs ever discovered. With more than 200 bronze ritual vessels and 109 inscriptions of Lady Fu Hao’s name, archaeologists realized they had stumbled across the tomb of the militant consort to King Wu Ding, as described in 170 to 180 Shang oracle bones . Bronze vessels, stoneware and pottery vessels, bronze weapons, jade figures, hair combs, and bone hairpins were found.

Tomb of Fu Hao: With more than 200 bronze ritual vessels and 109 inscriptions of Lady Fu Hao's name, archaeologists realized they had stumbled across the tomb of the militant consort to King Wu Ding, as described in 170 to 180 Shang oracle bones.

Ceramic and Bronze Work

Chinese bronze casting and pottery greatly advanced during the Shang dynasty, with bronze often used for art as well as for weapons. Shang-era ceramics grew more detailed during this era as technical skill advanced, though they did not yet reach the skill of the following Han Dynasty. Various excavations have yielded pottery fragments containing short sequences of symbols, suggesting early forms of writing that differed across regions. The Shang had a fully developed system of writing preserved on bronze inscriptions and a small number of writings on pottery, jade, horn, and oracle bones.

White pottery pot with geometric design : Shang dynasty (1600–1100 BC)

As far back as circa 1500 BCE, the early Shang Dynasty engaged in large-scale production of bronzeware vessels and weapons. This required a large labor force that could handle the mining, refining, and transportation of the necessary copper, tin, and lead ores, as well as official managers to oversee both hard laborers and skilled artisans.

The Shang royal court and aristocrats required a vast amount of bronze vessels for various ceremonial purposes and events of religious divination. Official rules even decreed how many bronze containers of each type a nobleman or noblewoman of a certain

rank could own. Bronze was also used for the fittings of spoke-wheeled chariots, which appeared in China around 1200 BCE.

Shang dynasty bronze ding vessel: The Shang royal court and aristocrats required a vast amount of different bronze vessels for various ceremonial purposes and events of religious divination.

With the increased amount of bronze available, the army could also better equip itself with an assortment of bronze weaponry. Bronze and stones weapons were an integral part of Shang society, and Shang infantry were armed with máo (矛) spears, yuè (鉞) pole-axes, gē (戈) pole-based dagger-axes, composite bows, and bronze or leather helmets.

A bronze axe of the Shang dynasty: Bronze weapons were an integral part of Shang society, and Shang infantry were armed with a variety of stone and bronze weaponry.

Bronze under the Zhou Dynasty

The art of the Zhou Dynasty was characterized by the introduction of iron and the refinement of elaborate bronzework.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the advancements and cultural adaptations of the Zhou Dynasty, including bronze and ironware

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BCE) was a Chinese dynasty that followed the Shang Dynasty and preceded the Qin Dynasty.
- Though iron was introduced to China during the Zhou Dynasty, this period produced what many consider the zenith of Chinese bronzeware.
- Zhou bronzework borrowed heavily from the earlier Shang Dynasty, as demonstrated by the practice of casting inscriptions in bronze vessels and the design of the vessels themselves.
- Many large bronzes bear cast inscriptions. These comprise the bulk of surviving early Chinese writing and have helped historians and archaeologists piece together the history of China.
- Chinese bronze artifacts are generally either utilitarian , such as spear points and other tools or weapons, or ceremonial/ ritual , such as more elaborate versions of everyday vessels in precious materials.

Key Terms

- **taotie**: A motif common on Chinese ritual bronze vessels from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The design typically consists of a frontal, bilaterally symmetrical zoomorphic mask with a pair of raised eyes and no lower jaw area.
- **Oracle bones**: Pieces of shell or bone, normally from ox scapulae or turtle plastrons, used for scapulimancy – a form of divination – in ancient China, mainly during the late Shang dynasty.

The Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BCE) was a Chinese dynasty that followed the Shang Dynasty and preceded the Qin Dynasty. Although the Zhou Dynasty lasted longer than any other dynasty in Chinese history, the actual political and military control of China by the Ji family lasted only until 771 BCE, a period known as the Western Zhou. Though iron was introduced to China during the Zhou Dynasty, this period of produced what many consider the zenith of Chinese bronzeware.

Cultural Influences

The archaeological record suggests that the Zhou were cultural opportunists. They were quick to adopt the material culture of the Shang, perhaps as a way of establishing their legitimacy. Zhou art also borrowed heavily from the Shang, illustrated by the casting of inscriptions in bronze vessels and the design of the vessels themselves.

Bronze Inscriptions

Many large bronzes bear cast inscriptions. These comprise the bulk of surviving early Chinese writing and have helped historians and archaeologists piece together the history of China, especially during the Zhou Dynasty. The bronzes of the Western Zhou Dynasty document large portions of history not found in the surviving texts of the time, and the medium of cast bronze lends the record a permanence not enjoyed by manuscripts. These inscriptions are commonly subdivided into four parts: a reference to the date and place, the naming of the event commemorated, the list of gifts given to the artisan in exchange for the bronze, and a dedication. These reference points have enabled historians to place most of the vessels within a certain time frame of the Western Zhou period and trace the evolution of the vessels and the events they record.

Uses and Types of Bronze

Chinese bronze artifacts are generally either utilitarian, such as spear points and other tools or weapons, or ceremonial/ritual, such as more elaborate versions in precious materials of everyday vessels. The majority of surviving Chinese ancient bronze artifacts are ritual forms rather than the practical equivalents. Weapons such as daggers and axes had a sacrificial meaning, symbolizing the heavenly power of the ruler. The strong religious associations of bronze objects led to a development of a great number of vessel

types and shapes, which became regarded as classic and totemic and were copied in other periods of Chinese art, often in other media such as porcelain .

Zhou Dynasty bronze sword: An Eastern-Zhou bronze sword excavated from Changsa, Hunan Province

Examples of ritual bronze vessels include the numerous large sacrificial tripods known as *dings* and other distinct shapes such as *gui* and *zun*. *Dings* are prehistoric ancient Chinese cauldrons, standing upon legs with a lid and two facing handles. They are one of the most important Chinese ritual bronzes and were generally made in two shapes: round vessels with three legs and rectangular vessels with four, the latter often called *fanding*. They were used for cooking, storage, and ritual offerings to the gods or to ancestors. *Gui* are bowl-shaped ancient Chinese ritual bronze vessels used to hold offerings of food and for ancestral tombs. *Zun* are wine and sacrificial vessels characterized by a tall cylindrical shape with no handles or legs and a mouth slightly broader than the body. In the late Zhōu Dynasty, this type of vessel became exceedingly elaborate, often taking the shape of animals and abandoning the traditional shape.

Zhou Bronze: A Western Zhou bronze gui vessel, c. 1000 BC.

The ritual books of China during the Zhou Dynasty describe who was allowed to use what kinds of sacrificial vessels. The king of Zhou, for example, used 9 dings and 8 gui vessels; a duke was allowed to use 7 dings and 6 guis; a baron could use 5 dings and 3 guis; and a nobleman was allowed to use 3 dings and 2 guis. Surviving identified Chinese ritual bronzes from the Zhou Dynasty tend to be highly decorated, often with the *taotie* motif with highly stylized animal faces including demons, symbolic animals, and abstract symbols.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Tomb Fu Hao YinXu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_Fu_Hao_YinXu.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Dinastia_shang%2C_tipode_ding_biansato%2C_xiii-xii_sec._ac.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shang_dynasty#/media/File:Dinastia_shang,_tipode_ding_biansato,_xiii-xii_sec._ac.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-China_shang_white_pottery_pot.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_ceramics#/media/File:China_shang_white_pottery_pot.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_bronze_battle_axe.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shang_dynasty#/media/File:CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_bronze_battle_axe.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oracle bone. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oracle_bone. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/piece-mold. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shang dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shang_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- bronze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bronze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Western Zhou Gui Vessel. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Western_Zhou_Gui_Vessel.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_bronze_sword.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou_dynasty#/media/File:CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_bronze_sword.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Bronze Age. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age#China. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ding. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ding_(vessel). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gui_(vessel). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- **Provided by**: National Gallery of Art. **Located at**: www.nga.gov/education/chinatp_zho.shtm. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Zhou dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oracle bones. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oracle%20bones. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.3: The Bronze Age is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.4: The Qin Dynasty

The Qin Dynasty

The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), though short-lived, is remembered for its military strength and its unification of China.

Learning Objectives

Describe the establishment of the first imperial dynasty of China and the architecture, literature, weaponry, and sculpture it produced

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In the mid and late 3rd century BCE, the Qin accomplished a series of swift conquests, eventually gaining control over the whole of China and creating a unified nation.
- During its reign , the Qin Dynasty achieved increased trade, improved agriculture, and revolutionary developments in military tactics, transportation, and weaponry, such as the sword and crossbow.
- The Dynasty is known for several impressive feats in architecture, sculpture, and other art, such as the beginnings of the Great Wall of China, the construction of the Terracotta Army, and the standardization of the writing system.

Key Terms

- **Qin Shihuang**: The self-proclaimed first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty.
- **Warring States Period**: A period in ancient China following the Spring and Autumn period and concluding with the victory of the state of Qin in 221 BCE, creating a unified China under the Qin Dynasty.
- **legalism**: A philosophy of focusing on the text of written law to the exclusion of the intent of law, elevating strict adherence to law over justice, mercy, grace and common sense.

History: The Qin Dynasty

The Qin Dynasty was the first imperial dynasty of China, lasting only 15 years from 221 to 206 BCE. The strength of the Qin state was greatly increased by the legalist reforms of Shang Yang in the 4^{th} century BCE, during the Warring States Period . Legalism is a philosophy of focusing on the text of written law to the exclusion of the intent of law, elevating strict adherence to law over justice, mercy, grace, and common sense. In the mid and late 3rd century BCE, the Qin accomplished a series of swift conquests, first ending the powerless Zhou Dynasty and eventually destroying the remaining six of the major states, thus gaining control over the whole of China. This resulted in the first-ever unified China.

Map of the Qin Empire, 210 BCE: The territories marked with red dots show the approximate extent of Qin political control at the death of Qin Shi Huang in 210 BCE.

Accomplishments of the Qin Dynasty

During its reign over China, the Qin Dynasty achieved increased trade, improved agriculture, and revolutionary developments in military tactics, transportation, and weaponry. Qin Shihuang , the self-proclaimed first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, made vast improvements to the military, which used the most advanced weaponry of its time. The sword was invented during the previous Warring States Period, first made of bronze and later of iron. The crossbow had been introduced in the 5th century BCE and was more powerful and accurate than the composite bows used earlier; it could also be rendered ineffective by removing two pins, which prevented enemies from capturing a working crossbow.

Picture of Qin Dynasty Arcuballista Bolts shown with Regular Handheld Crossbow Bolts, 5th-3rd century B.C.: The crossbow was introduced in the 5th century BC and was more powerful and accurate than the composite bows used earlier.

The Dynasty is also known for many impressive feats in architecture, sculpture, and other art, such as the beginnings of the Great Wall of China, the construction of the Terracotta Army, and the standardization of the writing system.

Decline of the Dynasty

Despite its military strength, however, the Dynasty did not last long. When Qin Shihuang died in 210 BCE, his son was placed on the throne by two of the previous emperor's advisers, who attempted to influence and control the administration of the entire dynasty through him. The advisers fought among themselves, however, which resulted in both their deaths and that of the second Qin emperor. Popular revolt broke out a few years later, and the weakened empire soon fell to a Chu lieutenant, who went on to found the Han Dynasty. Despite its rapid end, the Qin Dynasty influenced future Chinese empires, particularly the Han, and the European name for China is thought to be derived from it.

Architecture of the Qin Dynasty

Qin architecture is characterized by defensive structures and elements that conveyed authority and power, as exemplified by the early beginnings of the Great Wall.

Learning Objectives

Examine the characteristics of architecture created under the Qin Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architecture from the previous Warring States Period had several definitive aspects which carried into the Qin Dynasty .
- City walls used for defense were made longer, and secondary walls were often built to separate the different districts.
- Versatility in federal structures was emphasized to create a sense of authority and absolute power, conveyed by architectural elements such as high towers, pillar gates, terraces, and high buildings.
- Qin Shihuang , the self-proclaimed first Emperor, is responsible for the initial construction of what later became the Great Wall of China, which he built along the northern border to protect his empire against the Mongols .

Key Terms

- **Qin Shihuang**: The self-proclaimed first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty.
- **Great Wall of China**: A series of fortifications made of stone, brick, tamped earth, wood, and other materials, generally built along an east-to-west line across the historical northern borders of China to protect the Chinese states and empires against the raids and invasions of the nomadic groups of the Eurasian Steppe.

The Qin Dynasty was the first imperial dynasty of China, lasting from 221 to 206 BCE. The Dynasty followed the Warring States Period and resulted in the unification of China, ending 15 years later with the introduction of the Han Dynasty.

Architecture from the Warring States Period had several definitive aspects which carried into the Qin Dynasty. City walls used for defense were made longer, and secondary walls were often built to separate the different districts. Versatility in federal structures was emphasized to create a sense of authority and absolute power, conveyed by architectural elements such as high towers, pillar gates, terraces, and high buildings.

The Beginnings of the Great Wall

During its reign over China, the Qin sought to create an imperial state unified by highly structured political power and a stable economy able to support a large military. The Qin central government minimized the role of aristocrats and landowners to have direct administrative control over the peasantry, who comprised the overwhelming majority of the population and thus made up a large labor force. This allowed for the construction of ambitious projects such as the wall on the northern border now known as the Great Wall of China.

Qin Shihuang, the first self-proclaimed emperor of the Qin Dynasty, developed plans to fortify the northern border against the nomadic Mongols. The result was the initial construction of what later became the Great Wall of China, built by joining and strengthening the walls made by the feudal lords. These were expanded and rebuilt multiple times by later dynasties, also in response to threats from the north.

The Great Wall of China at Jinshanling: The initial construction of what would become the Great Wall of China began under Qin Shihuang during the Qin Dynasty.

Literature of the Qin Dynasty

Under the Qin Dynasty, a standardized system of Chinese writing was created. This unified Chinese culture for thousands of years.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the goals of literature produced during the Qin Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Prime Minister Li Si standardized the writing system across the whole country. This unified Chinese culture for thousands of years.
- Li Si is credited with creating the “lesser-seal” style of calligraphy , also known as small seal script. This served as a basis for the modern Chinese writing system and is still used in cards, posters, and advertising today.
- In 221 BC, Qin Shihuang , the first Qin emperor, conquered all of the Chinese states and governed with a single philosophy known as legalism . This encouraged severe punishments, particularly when the emperor was disobeyed.
- An attempt to purge all traces of the old dynasties and their philosophies led to the infamous burning of books and burying of scholars incident in 213 BCE.
- In an attempt to consolidate power, Qin Shihuang ordered the burning of all books on non-legalist philosophical viewpoints and intellectual subjects; scholars who refused to submit their books were executed.

Key Terms

- **logographic**: A writing system based on characters that represent a word or phrase, such as Chinese characters, Japanese kanji, and some Egyptian hieroglyphs.
- **legalism**: A philosophy focusing on the text of written law to the exclusion of the intent of law, elevating strict adherence to law over justice, mercy, grace, and common sense.

Li Si and the Standardization of Writing

The written language of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE) was logographic like that of the Zhu; each written character represented a word or phrase, as opposed to letters as in the English alphabet. As one of his most influential achievements, prime minister Li Si of the Qin Dynasty standardized the writing system to be of uniform size and shape across the whole country. This had a unifying effect on Chinese culture that lasted thousands of years. Li Si is also credited with creating the “lesser-seal” style of calligraphy, also known as small seal script. This served as a basis for the modern Chinese writing system and is still used in cards, posters, and advertising today.

Before the Qin conquest of the last six of the Warring States of Zhou China, local styles of characters evolved independently for centuries, producing what are called the “Scripts of the Six States” or “Great Seal Script”. Under one unified government however, the diversity was deemed undesirable as it hindered timely communication, trade, taxation, and transportation. In addition, independent scripts could express dissenting political ideas.

As a result, coaches, roads, currency, laws, weights, measures, and writing were systematically unified under the Qin. Characters different than those found in Qin were discarded, and Li Si's small seal characters became the standard for all regions within the empire. This policy came into effect around 220 BCE, the year after Qin's unification of the Chinese states, and was introduced by Li Si and two ministers.

Small Seal Script: Small seal script is an archaic form of Chinese calligraphy standardized and promulgated as a national standard by Li Si, prime minister under the Qin Dynasty.

The Burning of Books

One of the more drastic measures to eradicate the old schools of thought during the Qin Dynasty was the infamous burning of books and burying of scholars incident. This decree, passed in 213 BCE, almost single-handedly gave the Qin Dynasty a bad reputation in history. In an attempt to consolidate power, Qin Shihuang ordered the burning of all books on non-legalist philosophical viewpoints and intellectual subjects. All scholars who refused to submit their books were executed. As a result, only texts considered productive by the legalists (largely discussing pragmatic subjects such as agriculture, divination, and medicine) were preserved.

A Consolidation of Power

During the previous Warring States period, the Hundred Schools of Thought comprised many philosophies proposed by Chinese scholars, including Confucianism . In 221 BC, Qin Shihuang, the first Qin emperor, conquered all of the Chinese states and governed with a single philosophy known as legalism. This encouraged severe punishments, particularly when the emperor was disobeyed. Individuals' rights were devalued when they conflicted with the government's or the ruler's wishes, and merchants and scholars were considered unproductive and fit for elimination. During the dynasty, Confucianism—along with all other non-legalist philosophies—was suppressed by the First Emperor.

Killing the Scholars and Burning the Books (18th century Chinese painting): In 213 BCE, Qin Shihuang ordered the burning of all books on non-legalist philosophical viewpoints and intellectual subjects. All scholars who refused to submit their books were executed.

Sculpture of the Qin Dynasty

The Qin Dynasty is perhaps best known for the impressive Terracotta Army, built to protect Qin Shihuang in the afterlife.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the sculpture of the Qin Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Qin, under the leadership of emperor Qin Shihuang , accomplished a series of swift conquests and gained control over all of China, unifying it as a country for the first time.
- The Qin made many advancements in sculpture during their short reign, building on techniques practiced by the previous Zhou Dynasty .
- The most famous example of sculpture under the Qin Dynasty was a project commissioned during Qin Shihuang's rule known as the Terracotta Army, intended to protect the emperor after his death.
- The Terracotta Army consists of more than 7,000 life-size terracotta figures of warriors and horses, buried with Qin Shihuang after his death in 210–209 BCE.
- Originally, the figures were painted with bright pigments of pink, red, green, blue, black, brown, white, and lilac; however, much of the color coating flaked off or faded.
- The figures were constructed in several poses, including standing infantry, kneeling archers, and charioteers with horses.

Key Terms

- **terracotta**: A type of earthenware, clay-based unglazed or glazed ceramic, in which the fired body is porous.
- **Qin Shihuang**: The self-proclaimed first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty.

The Qin Dynasty was the first imperial dynasty of China, lasting from 221 to 206 BCE. The Dynasty followed the Warring States Period and ended after only 15 years with the Han Dynasty. The Qin, under the leadership of its first self-proclaimed emperor Qin Shihuang, accomplished a series of swift conquests, first ending the powerless Zhou Dynasty and eventually destroying the remaining six of the major states and gaining control of all of China. Under the Qin, it was unified as a country for the first time. The Qin made many advancements in sculpture during their short reign, building on techniques practiced by the previous Zhou Dynasty.

The Terracotta Army

The most famous example of sculpture under the Qin Dynasty was a project commissioned during Qin Shihuang's rule known as the Terracotta Army, intended to protect the emperor after his death. The Terracotta Army was inconspicuous due to its underground location and thus not discovered until 1974. The "army" of sculptures consists of more than 7,000 life-size terracotta figures of warriors and horses that were buried with Qin Shihuang after his death in 210–209 BCE. The three pits containing the Terracotta Army were estimated in 2007 to hold more than 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses, and 150 cavalry horses, the majority of which remained buried in the pits nearby Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum . Non-military terracotta figures were found in other pits, including officials, acrobats, strongmen, and musicians.

Style of the Figures

The figures were painted in bright pigments before they were placed in the vault , and the original colors of pink, red, green, blue, black, brown, white, and lilac were visible when the pieces were first unearthed. However, exposure to air has caused the pigments to fade and flake off, revealing their natural terracotta color. The figures were constructed in several poses, including standing infantry, kneeling archers, and charioteers with horses. They vary in height according to their roles, with the generals tallest, and each figure's head appears to be unique, with a variety of facial features, expressions, and hair styles. Along with the colored lacquer finish, the individual facial features would have given the figures a realistic feel.

The Terracotta Army: The Terracotta Army consists of more than 7,000 life-size terracotta figures of warriors and horses, buried with the first Emperor of Qin in 210 BCE.

Construction

The terracotta army figures were manufactured in workshops by government laborers and local craftsmen using local materials. Heads, arms, legs, and torsos were created separately and then assembled. Eight face molds were most likely used, with clay added after assembly to provide individual facial features. It is believed that the legs were made using the same process used for terracotta drainage pipes. This would classify the process as assembly line production, with specific parts manufactured and assembled after being fired, as opposed to being crafted from one solid piece and subsequently fired. In those times of tight imperial control, each workshop was required to inscribe its name on items produced to ensure quality control.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Qin empire 210 BCE. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Qin_empire_210_BCE.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Qinacruballistabolts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Qinacruballistabolts.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of China. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_China. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Warring States Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Warring%20States%20Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Legalism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin Shihuang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin%20Shihuang. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-The_Great_Wall_of_China_at_Jinshanling-edit.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Wall_of_China#/media/File:The_Great_Wall_of_China_at_Jinshanling-edit.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin Dynasty. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/textbooks/boundless-art-history-textbook/chinese-and-korean-art-before-1279-ce-14/the-qin-dynasty-96/the-qin-dynasty-459-5603/issues/new/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- XiaozhuanQinquan.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Seal_Script#/media/File:XiaozhuanQinquan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Killing_the_Scholars%2C_Burning_the_Books.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning_of_books_and_burying_of_scholars#/media/File:Killing_the_Scholars,_Burning_the_Books.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Small seal script. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Seal_Script. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Burning of books and burying of scholars. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning_of_books_and_burying_of_scholars. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Logogram. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Logogram. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Li Si . **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Si. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 0px-terracotta-army-china2.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Terracotta_Army-China2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Qin Dynasty. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/textbooks/boundless-art-history-textbook/chinese-and-korean-art-before-1279-ce-14/the-qin-dynasty-96/the-qin-dynasty-459-5603/issues/new/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Terracotta Army. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Terracotta_Army. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qin Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.4: The Qin Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.5: The Han Dynasty

Philosophy and Art of the Han Dynasty

Spanning more than four centuries, the Han Dynasty period is considered a golden age in Chinese history. This period was strongly influenced by Confucianism.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of Han philosophy and art on this golden age in Chinese history

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Han Dynasty was an imperial dynasty of China, preceded by the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE) and succeeded by the Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE).
- The Dynasty is separated into two periods: the Western Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) and the Eastern Han (25–220 CE).
- The early Western Han court simultaneously accepted the philosophical teachings of Legalism , Huang-Lao Daoism, and Confucianism in making state decisions and shaping government policy.
- However, the Han court under Emperor Wu gave Confucianism exclusive patronage . In 136 BCE, he abolished all academic chairs not associated with the Confucian Five Classics and encouraged officials to receive a Confucian-based education at the Imperial University that established in 124 BCE.
- Han Dynasty poetry was dominated by the fu genre , intermediary pieces between poetry and prose in which a place, object, feeling, or other subject is described in detail and from as many angles as possible.

Key Terms

- **Confucianism**: An ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher by the same name (551–479 BCE). It emphasizes the ethics of filial piety, harmonious relationships, ritual, and righteousness.
- **Legalism**: A utilitarian political and realist reform-oriented philosophy meant to strengthen government and reinforce adherence to the law, stressing a strict system of punishments and rewards to maintain law and order.

Overview: The Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty was an imperial dynasty of China, preceded by the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE) and succeeded by the Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE). It was founded by the rebel leader Liu Bang, known posthumously as Emperor Gaozu of Han. It was briefly interrupted by the Xin Dynasty (9–23 CE) of the former regent Wang Mang, an interim that separates the Han into two periods: the Western Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) and the Eastern Han (25–220 CE). Spanning more than four centuries, the Han Dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese history. To this day, China's majority ethnic group refers to itself as the "Han people," and Chinese characters are referred to as "Han characters".

Map of the Han dynasty in 100 BC: The Han Dynasty (seen shaded in purple) was an imperial dynasty of China, preceded by the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE) and succeeded by the Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE).

Han Philosophy

The early Western Han court simultaneously accepted the philosophical teachings of Legalism, Huang-Lao Daoism, and Confucianism in making state decisions and shaping government policy. However, the Han court under Emperor Wu gave Confucianism exclusive patronage.

Confucianism

Confucianism is an ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucious (551–479 BCE). Confucianism originated as an "ethical-sociopolitical teaching" during the Spring and Autumn Periods, but during the Han Dynasty it developed metaphysical and cosmological elements. At the core of Confucian ethics were the virtues of filial piety, harmonious relationships, ritual , and righteousness.

Unlike the original ideology espoused by Confucius , Han Confucianism in Emperor Wu's reign was the creation of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE). Dong was a scholar and minor official who aggregated the ethical Confucian ideas of ritual, filial piety, and harmonious relationships with the five phases (the natural cycles that governed Heaven, Earth, and Man) and yin-yang cosmologies. Dong's synthesis justified the imperial system of government within the natural order of the universe.

Education

In 136 BCE, Emperor Wu abolished all academic chairs (boshi 博) not dealing with the Confucian Five Classics and encouraged nominees for office to receive a Confucian-based education at the Imperial University that he established in 124 BCE. The Imperial University grew in importance as the student body grew to over 30,000 by the 2nd century CE. A Confucian-based education was also made available at commander-level schools, and private schools opened in small towns where teachers earned respectable incomes from tuition payments.

Notable Texts

Some important texts were created and studied by scholars during this time. Philosophical works written by Yang Xiong (53 BCE – 18 CE), Huan Tan (43 BCE – 28 CE), Wang Chong (27–100 CE), and Wang Fu (78–163 CE) questioned whether human nature was innately good or evil and posed challenges to Dong's universal order. *The Records of the Grand Historian* by Sima Tan (d. 110 BCE) and his son Sima Qian (145–86 BCE) established the standard model for all of imperial China's Standard Histories, such as the *Book of Han* written by Ban Biao (3–54 CE), his son Ban Gu (32–92 CE), and his daughter Ban Zhao (45–116 CE). There were dictionaries such as the *Shuowen Jiezi* by Xu Shen (c. 58 – c. 147 CE) and the *Fangyan* by Yang Xiong. Biographies on important figures were written by various gentrymen.

Han dynasty poetry was dominated by the fu genre, which achieved its greatest prominence during the reign of Emperor Wu. Fu are intermediary pieces between poetry and prose in which a place, object, feeling, or other subject is described and rhapsodized in exhaustive detail and from as many angles as possible. Classical fu composers attempted to use an extensive vocabulary and included many rare and archaic terms in their compositions . Fu poems employ alternating rhyme and prose, varying line length, close alliteration, onomatopoeia, loose parallelism, and extensive cataloging of their topics.

Burial Goods of the Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese history in which a great deal of art was produced, including burial goods.

Learning Objectives

Describe the materials individuals were buried with during the Han Dyansty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- One of the most well-known styles of art during the Han Dynasty was burial art, which evolved between the Western and Eastern Han periods.
- During the Western Han period, burial goods were usually wares and pieces of art that had been used by the tomb occupant during life.
- During the Eastern Han period, stylistic goods, wares, and artwork found in tombs were usually made exclusively for burial.
- Common items used for burial during the Eastern Han period included miniature models of ceramic towers, querns, water wells, pigsties, pestling shops, and farm fields with pottery pigs, dogs, sheep, chickens, and ducks.
- Although many items placed in tombs were commonly used wares and utensils, it was considered taboo to bring objects specified for burial into living quarters or the imperial palace.
- The Han Dynasty was known for jade burial suits, ceremonial suits made of pieces of jade in which members of the royalty were buried.
- One of the earliest known depictions of a landscape in Chinese art comes from a pair of hollow-tile door panels from a Western Han Dynasty tomb near Zhengzhou, dated 60 BCE.

Key Terms

- **jade**: An ornamental rock used for hardstone carving since prehistoric periods.

Overview: The Han Dynasty

The period of the Han Dynasty spanned more than four centuries and is considered a golden age in Chinese history during which a great deal of art was produced. The dynasty has been divided into the Western Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) and the Eastern Han (25–220 CE) periods. One of the most well-known legacies of the Han Dynasty is burial art, which evolved between the Western and Eastern Han periods.

Art of the Han Dynasty

Burial Goods

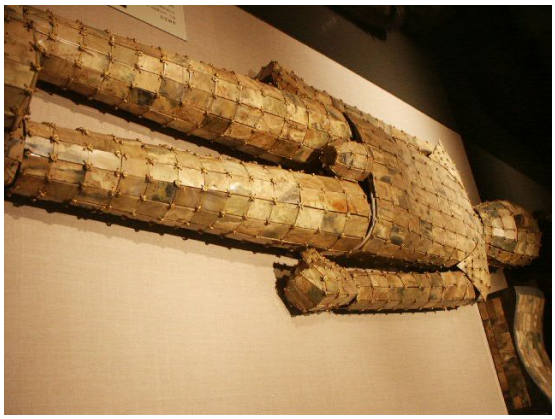
During the Western Han period, burial goods consisted of wares and pieces of art used by the tomb occupant when he or she was alive. During the Eastern Han period, however, stylistic goods, wares, and artwork found in tombs were usually made exclusively for burial and not previously used by the deceased.

Common items for burial during the Eastern Han period included miniature ceramic towers—usually watchtowers and urban residential towers—which provide historians with clues about lost wooden architecture. In addition to towers, there were also miniature models of querns (hand mills for grinding grain), water wells, pigsties, pestling shops, and farm fields with pottery pigs, dogs, sheep, chickens, and ducks. Although many items placed in tombs were commonly used wares and utensils, it was taboo to bring objects specified for burial into living quarters or the imperial palace. This ban was lifted once the objects were properly announced at funeral ceremonies , where they became known as mingqi (明/冥, “fearsome artifacts,” “objects for the dead,” or “brilliant artifacts”).

Model of Han ceramic tomb: A model of a Han ceramic tomb of a multiple-story residential tower with a first-floor gatehouse and courtyard, mid-floor balcony, windows, and clearly distinguished support brackets.

Other Tomb Art

The Han Dynasty was known for jade burial suits, ceremonial suits made of pieces of jade in which members of royalty were buried. One of the earliest known landscape depictions in Chinese art comes from a pair of hollow-tile door panels from a Western Han Dynasty tomb near Zhengzhou, dated 60 BCE. A scene of continuous depth recession is conveyed by the zigzag of lines representing roads and garden walls, giving the impression that one is looking down from the top of a hill. This scene was made by the repeated impression of stamps on the clay while it was still soft, before firing . The oldest known classically painted Chinese landscape is a work by Zhan Ziqian of the later Sui Dynasty (581–618 CE).



A Han Dynasty Jade burial suit: A Jade burial suit is a ceremonial suit made of pieces of jade in which royal members in Han Dynasty were buried.

Architecture of the Han Dynasty

Remains of Han Dynasty architecture include ruins of brick and rammed earth walls, rammed earth platforms, and funerary stone pillar gates.

Learning Objectives

Describe the building materials, layout, and architectural characteristics of Han palace halls, towers, tombs, and other abodes

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Surviving architecture from the Han Dynasty includes ruins of brick and rammed earth walls (including above- ground city walls and underground tomb walls), rammed earth platforms for terraced altars and halls, funerary stone or brick pillar - gates, and scattered ceramic roof tiles. Timber was the chief building material in Han architecture, used for grand palace halls, multi-story towers, multi-story residential halls, and humble abodes.
- Walls of frontier towns and forts in Inner Mongolia were typically constructed with stamped clay bricks instead of rammed earth. Thatched or tiled roofs were supported by wooden pillars, since the addition of brick, rammed earth, or mud walls did not actually support the roof. Stone and plaster were also used for domestic architecture.
- Valuable clues about Han architecture can be found in burial artwork of ceramic models, paintings, and carved or stamped bricks discovered in tombs and other sites.

Key Terms

- **pillar**: A large post, often used as supporting architecture.
- **crenellations**: The battlements of a castle or other building.
- **dougong**: A unique structural element of interlocking wooden brackets, one of the most important elements in traditional Chinese architecture.
- **rammed earth**: A construction material made by compressing dirt.

Surviving architecture from the Han Dynasty includes ruins of brick and rammed earth walls (including above-ground city walls and underground tomb walls), rammed earth platforms for terraced altars and halls, funerary stone or brick pillar-gates, and scattered ceramic roof tiles that once adorned timber halls. Sections of the Han-era rammed earth Great Wall still exist in Gansu province, along with the frontier ruins of thirty beacon towers and two fortified castles with crenellations .

Building Materials

Timber was the chief building material in Han Dynasty architecture, used for grand palace halls, multi-story towers, multi-story residential halls, and humble abodes. However, due to the rapid decay of wood over time and its susceptibility to fire, the oldest wooden buildings found in China (which include several temple halls of Mount Wutai) date no earlier than the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE).

Walls of frontier towns and forts in Inner Mongolia were typically constructed with stamped clay bricks instead of rammed earth. Thatched or tiled roofs were supported by wooden pillars, since the addition of brick, rammed earth, or mud walls did not support the roof. Stone and plaster were used for domestic architecture. Tiled eaves projecting outward were built to distance falling rainwater from the walls; they were supported by dougong brackets that were sometimes elaborately decorated. Molded designs usually decorated the ends of roof tiles, as seen in artistic models of buildings and in surviving tile pieces.

The Gaoyi Que, a stone-carved pillar-gate (que): A stone-carved pillar-gate, or que (闕), 6 m (20 ft) in total height, located at the tomb of Gao Yi in Ya'an, Sichuan province, was built during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 CE). Notice the stone-carved decorations of roof tile eaves, despite the fact that Han Dynasty stone que (part of the walled structures around tomb entrances) lacked wooden or ceramic components (but often imitated wooden buildings with ceramic roof tiles).

Styles of Architecture

Tombs and Houses

Valuable clues about Han architecture can be found in an artwork of ceramic models, paintings, and carved or stamped bricks discovered in tombs and other sites. Han tombs were laid out like underground houses, comparable to the scenes of courtyard houses found on tomb bricks and in three-dimensional models. Han homes had a courtyard area (some had multiple courtyards), with slightly elevated halls connected by stairways. Multi-story buildings included the main colonnaded residence halls built around the courtyards as well as watchtowers. The halls were built with intersecting crossbeams and rafters usually carved with decorations; stairways and walls were plastered over to produce a smooth surface and then painted.

Tower Architecture

There are Han-era literary references to tall towers in the capital cities. They often served as watchtowers, astronomical observatories, and religious establishments meant to attract the favor of immortals . It is unknown whether miniature ceramic models of residential towers and watchtowers found in Han Dynasty tombs are faithful representations of such timber towers; nevertheless, they reveal vital clues about lost timber architecture.

Only a handful of ceramic models of multi-story towers exist from the pre-Han and Western Han eras, though hundreds of existing models were made during the Eastern Han period. Model towers could be fired as one piece in the kiln or assembled from several different ceramic pieces. Each model is unique, yet they share common features such as a walled courtyard at the bottom, a balcony with balustrades and windows for every floor, and roof tiles capping and concealing the ceiling rafters. There were also door

knockers, human figures peering out of the windows or standing on the balconies, and model pets such as dogs in the courtyard. Perhaps the most direct evidence to suggest that miniature ceramic towers represent of real-life Han timber towers are the tile patterns. Artistic patterns found on the circular tiles that cap the eave-ends on the miniature models are exact matches of patterns found on roof tiles excavated at sites such as the royal palaces in Chang'an and Luoyang.

Other Types of Buildings

Other ceramic models from the Han burial sites reveal a variety of building types. These include multi-story storehouses such as granaries, courtyard houses with multi-story halls, kiosks, walled gate towers, mills, factories and workshops, animal pens, outhouses, and water wells. Even models of single-story farmhouses show great detail, including tiled roofs and courtyards. Models of granaries and storehouses had tiled rooftops, dougong brackets, windows, and stilt supports raising them above ground level. Han models of water wells sometimes feature tiny tiled roofs supported by beams that house the rope pulley used for lifting a bucket.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Han_Dynasty_100_BCE.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_dynasty#/media/File:Han_Dynasty_100_BCE.png. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Fu (poetry). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fu_(poetry). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Han Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art%23Han_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Society and culture of the Han Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_and_culture_of_the_Han_Dynasty%23Arts_and_crafts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Confucianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- grave goods. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/grave%20goods. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Legalism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- han-jade-burial-suit.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Han_jade_burial_suit.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- han-dynasty-pottery-tower2.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Han_Dynasty_pottery_tower2.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Han Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gao Yi Que2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gao_Yi_Que2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Science and technology of the Han Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_and_technology_of_the_Han_Dynasty%23Structural_engineering. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- thatched or tiled roofs. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/thatched%20or%20tiled%20roofs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pillar. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pillar. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- rammed earth. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rammed_earth. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.5: The Han Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.6: The Six Dynasties Period

Painting during the Six Dynasties Period

During the Six Dynasties period (220–589 CE), people began to write about art and appreciate painting for its own beauty.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the Six Principles of painting according to Xie He and draw a timeline of the eras within the Six Dynasties

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Six Dynasties period takes its name from the six ruling dynasties of the era: the Eastern Wu (222–280), Jin (265–420), Liu Song (420–479), Southern Qi (479–502), Liang (502–557), and Chen (557–589) Dynasties.
- Individual artists began to rise to attention, such as Gu Kaizhi. Many illustrated Confucian moral themes—such as the preferred behavior of a wife to her husband or of children to their parents—with gracefully drawn figures.
- Xie He—a writer, art historian, and critic in 5th century China—is most famous for outlining six points to consider when judging a painting, taken from the preface to his book, *The Record of the Classification of Old Painters*.
- Xie He's six elements include: 1) Spirit Resonance, 2) Bone Method, 3) Correspondence to the Object, 4) Suitability to Type, 5) Division and Planning, and 6) Transmission by Copying.

Key Terms

- **vitality**: Energy or vigor.
- **Confucian**: One who follows the teachings of Confucius.

The Six Dynasties period (220–589 CE) takes its name from the six ruling dynasties of the era: the Eastern Wu Dynasty (222–280), Jin Dynasty (265–420), Liu Song Dynasty (420–479), Southern Qi Dynasty (479–502), Liang Dynasty (502–557), and Chen Dynasty (557–589). During the Six Dynasties period, people began to write about art and appreciate painting for its own beauty. Individual artists began to rise to attention, such as Gu Kaizhi.

Many illustrated Confucian moral themes—such as the preferred behavior of a wife to her husband or of children to their parents—with gracefully drawn figures.

Luoshenfu, Gu Kaizhi (344-406 CE): The painting *Luoshenfu* by artist Gu Kaizhi, painted during the Six Dynasties Period.

The Six Principles

Xie He—a writer, art historian, and critic in 5th century China—is most famous for outlining six points to consider when judging a painting. These were taken from the preface to his book, *The Record of the Classification of Old Painters*, written circa 550 CE. According to him, the six elements that define a painting are:

1. *Spirit Resonance*, or vitality , which refers to the flow of energy that encompasses theme, work, and artist. Xie He said that without Spirit Resonance, there was no need to explore a painting further.
2. *Bone Method*, or the way of using the brush, which refers not only to texture and brush strokes, but also to the close link between handwriting and personality. In his day, the art of calligraphy was inseparable from that of painting.
3. *Correspondence to the Object*, or the depicting of form , which includes shapes and lines .
4. *Suitability to Type*, or the application of color, which includes layers, value , and tone .
5. *Division and Planning*, or placing and arrangement, which corresponds to composition , space , and depth.
6. *Transmission by Copying*, or the copying of models, which means not only from life but also from works of antiquity .

Tomb mural: Murals from a tomb of the Six Dynasties period (550-577 CE) in Jiuyuangang, Xinzhou, showing a rural hunting scene on horseback.

Calligraphy during the Six Dynasties Period

The calligraphic tradition of East Asia originated in China and greatly advanced during the Six Dynasties period.

Learning Objectives

Describe the evolution of Chinese calligraphy from ancient China to the Six Dynasties

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Chinese calligraphy is an artistic writing form widely practiced and revered in the Sinosphere , which includes China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.
- The various styles of calligraphy adhere to general standards. Chinese calligraphy and ink and wash painting are closely related, accomplished using similar tools and techniques.
- In ancient China, painting and calligraphy were the most highly appreciated arts in court circles. They were done almost exclusively by amateurs, aristocrats, and scholar-officials who had the leisure to perfect the technique.
- Invented in the 1st century, paper gradually replaced silk as the backdrop for calligraphy. Original writings by famous calligraphers have been highly valued throughout China's history and are mounted on scrolls and hung on walls like paintings.
- Some of the most famous Chinese calligraphers, including Wang Xizhi, lived during the Six Dynasties period.
- Wang Xizhi's most famous work is the *Lanting Xu*, the preface to a collection of poems written by a number of poets who gathered at Lan Ting, near the town of Shaoxing in Zhejiang province.

Key Terms

- **literati**: A person who engages in critical study, thought, and reflection about the reality of society.
- **sinosphere**: Areas and countries that have been heavily influenced by Chinese culture.
- **soot**: Fine black or dull brown particles of amorphous carbon and tar produced by the incomplete combustion of coal or oil.
- **ink and wash painting**: An East Asian type of brush painting of Chinese origin that uses the same black ink as in East Asian calligraphy; also known as literati painting.

Background: Calligraphy and Ancient China

Calligraphy, a visual art related to writing, is the design and execution of lettering with a broad tip brush or other instrument. The calligraphic tradition of East Asia originated in China and is widely practiced and revered in the Sinosphere (a designation that often includes China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam). The various styles of calligraphy in the tradition adhere to a general standards. Chinese calligraphy and ink and wash painting are closely related, as they are accomplished using similar tools and techniques. Chinese painting and calligraphy are distinguished from other cultural arts because they emphasize motion and tend to be charged with dynamic life.

In ancient China, painting and calligraphy were the most highly appreciated arts in court circles; they were done almost exclusively by amateurs, aristocrats, and scholar-officials who had the leisure to perfect the technique and sensibility necessary for great brushwork. Calligraphy was considered the purest form of painting. The implements included the brush pen made of animal hair and black inks made from pine soot and animal glue. Writing and painting were done on silk, gradually replaced after the invention of paper in the 1st century. Original writings by famous calligraphers have been valued throughout China's history; they are mounted on scrolls and hung on walls as paintings are.

Palace Lady detail from Admonitions of the Instructress to the Palace Ladies: In ancient China, painting and calligraphy were the most highly appreciated arts in court circles; they were done almost exclusively by amateurs, aristocrats, and scholar-officials who had the leisure to perfect the technique and sensibility necessary for great brushwork.

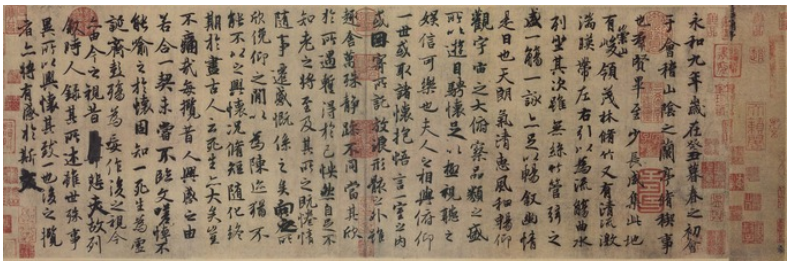
Calligraphy during the Six Dynasties

Some of the most famous Chinese calligraphers lived during the Six Dynasties period. The Six Dynasties refers to the dynasties during the periods of the Eastern Wu Dynasty (222–280), Jin Dynasty (265–420), Liu Song Dynasty (420–479), Southern Qi Dynasty (479–502), Liang Dynasty (502–557), and Chen Dynasty (557–589).

Wang Xizhi and the *Lanting Xu*

One of these famous calligraphers was Wang Xizhi, who lived during the 4th century CE in the middle of the Jin Dynasty. His most famous work is the *Lanting Xu*, the preface to a collection of poems written by a number of poets who gathered at Lan Ting near the town of Shaoxing in Zhejiang province. Wang Xizhi was traditionally referred to as the Sage of Calligraphy and is considered one of the most esteemed Chinese calligraphers of all time and a master of all forms, especially the running script. The Emperor Taizong admired his works greatly. In addition to the Wang Xizhi's esteem in China, he has been and remains influential in Japanese calligraphy.

The *Lantingji Xu* is a famous work of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi composed in the year 353 CE. Written in semi-cursive script, it is among the best-known pieces of calligraphy in Chinese history and is often copied. This work began as the preface to a seminal collection of Chinese nature poetry but developed a life of its own. The preface describes an event during that year's Spring Purification Festival in which 42 literati , including Xie An and Sun Chuo, were present at a gathering at the Orchid Pavilion near Shaoxing, Zhejiang, at which they composed poems, played music, and enjoyed wine. The preface consists of 324 Chinese characters in 28 lines . The character zhī (之) appears 20 times, but no two appearances look the same, a feature that constitutes calligraphic excellence. This celebrated work of literature flows rhythmically and gave rise to several Chinese idioms .



Main text of a Tang Dynasty copy of Wang Xizhi's *Lantingji Xu*, by Feng Chengsu.: Throughout Chinese history, many copies were made of the Lantingji Xu, which described the beauty of the landscape around the Orchid Pavilion and the get-together of Wang Xizhi and his friends. The original is lost; however, some believe it was buried in the mausoleum of Emperor Taizong of Tang. This Tang copy made between 627-650 CE is considered the best of the copies that has survived.

Architecture during the Six Dynasties Period

The Six Dynasties (220-589 CE) in Chinese history was a time of great advancements in architecture.

Learning Objectives

Characterize the architecture and art of the Six Dynasties

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Six Dynasties generally includes the periods of the Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE), the Jin Dynasty (265–420 CE), and the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589 CE).
- By the 6th century, Buddhism had spread with tremendous momentum throughout China and dramatically influenced Chinese architecture.
- Although multiple-story towers such as guard towers and residential apartments existed in previous periods, it was during this time that the Chinese transformed the rounded earthen mound of the stupa into the towering pagoda to house the sacred buried relics of Buddha at its core.
- The Songyue Pagoda, built in 523, is the oldest extant pagoda in China; its unique many-sided shape may represent an early attempt to merge the Chinese architecture of straight edges with the circular style of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent.
- Although mostly only ruins of brick and rammed earth walls and towers from the Six Dynasties have survived, information on ancient Chinese architecture can be discerned from realistic clay models of buildings created as funerary items.
- The Jin Dynasty was particularly known for miniature models of buildings used to decorate the tops of "soul vases" and for its celadon porcelain wares.

Key Terms

- **celadon**: Ceramic ware with a pale green glaze.
- **ensemble**: A group of separate things that contribute to a coordinated whole.

Background: The Six Dynasties

The Six Dynasties is a collective term for six Chinese dynasties during the periods of the Three Kingdoms (220–280 CE; also known as the Eastern Wu or the Cao Wei), the Jin Dynasty (265–420 CE), and the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589 CE), which included the Liu Song, Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen Dynasties. During this time, the Chinese people made great advancements in architecture.

Architecture in the Six Dynasties

By the 6th century, Buddhism had spread with tremendous momentum throughout China, and Chinese culture was adjusting and adapting its traditions to include Buddhism worship. This also had a profound influence on architecture. Although multiple-story towers such as guard towers and residential apartments existed in previous periods, the distinct Chinese pagoda tower (used for

storing Buddhist scriptures) evolved during the Six Dynasties period from the stupa, which came from Buddhist traditions of protecting sutras in ancient India. The Chinese transformed the rounded earthen mound of the stupa into the towering pagoda to house the sacred buried relics of Buddha at its core.

The Songyue Pagoda, built in 523, is the oldest extant pagoda in China, enduring primarily because it was constructed from brick instead of wood. The unique many-sided shape of the Songyue Pagoda may represent an early attempt to merge the Chinese architecture of straight edges with the circular style of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent. The perimeter of the pagoda decreases as it rises, as seen in Indian and Central Asian Buddhist cave temple pillars and the later round pagodas in China.

Songyue Pagoda: A circular-based stone-constructed Buddhist pagoda built in 523 CE during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period of the Six Dynasties. It is the oldest existent stone Chinese pagoda. Earlier wooden Chinese pagodas have not survived.

Funerary Models

Tombs of members of the ruling Xiao family, with sculptural ensembles in various states of preservation , are located near Nanjing. The best surviving example of a monumental statuary from the Liang Dynasty is the ensemble of the Tomb of Xiao Xiu (475–518 CE), a brother of Emperor Wu, located in Qixia District east of Nanjing.

Although mostly only ruins of brick and rammed earth walls and towers from the Six Dynasties have survived, information on ancient Chinese architecture (especially wooden architecture) can be discerned from realistic clay models of buildings created as funerary items. These depicted miniature versions of Six Dynasties architecture. Throughout the Six Dynasties, miniature models of buildings or entire architectural ensembles were made to decorate the tops of “soul vases” (*hunping*) found in many tombs of that period. In addition to illustrating architecture, jar designs often incorporated animal and Buddhist figures.

Eastern Wu artwork depicting architecture: A green-glaze ceramic jar from the Three Kingdoms (or Eastern Wu) period with human figures, birds, and architecture, on display in the Nanjing Museum.

Jar of the Western Jin: Jar designs of the Jin Dynasty often incorporated architectural designs as well as animal and Buddhist figures.

Advances in Technology

Technology advanced significantly during the relatively short Three Kingdoms (220-280 CE) period, including in the realm of architecture. Shu chancellor Zhuge Liang invented the wooden ox, an early form of the wheelbarrow, and improved on the repeating crossbow. Wei mechanical engineer Ma Jun is considered the equal of his predecessor Zhang Heng. He invented a hydraulic-powered mechanical puppet theater for Emperor Ming of Wei; square-pallet chain pumps for irrigation of gardens in Luoyang; and the ingenious design of the South Pointing Chariot, a non-magnetic directional compass operated by differential gears.

Pottery Palace: Though from the Han Dynasty (c. 2nd century BCE – 2nd century CE), this pottery palace provides a good example of pottery created for elite burial that illustrates the architecture of the time.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Tomb_of_Northern_Qi_Dynasty_in_Jiuyuangang%2C_Xinzhou%2C_Mural_02.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Dynasties#/media/File:Tomb_of_Northern_Qi_Dynasty_in_Jiuyuangang,_Xinzhou,_Mural_02.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Luoshenfu Gu Kai Zhi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Luoshenfu_Gu_Kai_Zhi.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chinese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_painting%23Sui_and_Tang_dynasties_.28581.E2.80.93907.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Six Dynasties. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Dynasties. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Song Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vitality. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vitality. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Confucian. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Confucian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- LantingXu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:LantingXu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nvshizhentu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nvshizhentu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chinese calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art%23Calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Lantingji Xu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lantingji_Xu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wang Xizhi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Xizhi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/sinosphere. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- soot. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/soot. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- JinJar. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JinJar.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Eastern_Wu_green_glaze_pottery_jar_%28top%29.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Wu#/media/File:Eastern_Wu_green_glaze_pottery_jar_(top).JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pottery palace 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pottery_palace_1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Songyue_Pagoda_1.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Songyue_Pagoda#/media/File:Songyue_Pagoda_1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Six Dynasties poetry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Dynasties_poetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Funerary art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Funerary_art%23China. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nanjing. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanjing%23Culture_and_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Six Dynasties. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Dynasties. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Three Kingdoms. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Kingdoms. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Southern and Northern Dynasties. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_and_Northern_Dynasties%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jin Dynasty (265-420). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jin_Dynasty_(265-420). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ensemble. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ensemble. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- celadon. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/celadon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fu poetry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/fu%20poetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.6: The Six Dynasties Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.7: The Tang Dynasty

Architecture during the Tang Dynasty

Since the Tang Dynasty, Chinese architecture has had a major influence on the architectural styles of Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.

Learning Objectives

Describe the influence of architecture from the Tang dynasty on Korea, Vietnam, and Japan

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Chinese culture flourished and further matured during the Tang Dynasty , considered an age of great advancements of architecture, poetry, and other arts.
- From the Tang Dynasty (618–907) onward, brick and stone architecture gradually became more common and replaced wooden edifices.
- The earliest examples of this transition can be seen in building projects such as the Zhaozhou Bridge of 605 or the Xumi Pagoda of 636, though stone and brick architecture was used in subterranean tomb architecture of earlier dynasties.
- The tombs and mausoleums of imperial family members are counted as part of the imperial tradition in architecture. These above-ground earthen mounds and pyramids had subterranean shaft-and-vault structures lined with brick walls.
- Nanchan Temple in Shanxi Province was built in 782 CE, and its Great Buddha Hall is currently China's oldest preserved timber building.
- Chang'an was the capital city of the Tang Dynasty, as in the earlier Han and Jin dynasties, and was made famous for its checkerboard pattern of main roads with walled and gated districts.

Key Terms

- **shaft**: In architecture, the body of a column; the cylindrical pillar between the capital and base.
- **Qianling Mausoleum**: Tomb site located in Shaanxi province, China, built by 684 (with additional construction until 706); the tombs house the remains of various members of the royal Li family.

Background: The Tang Dynasty

The Sui Dynasty (589–618 CE) was a short-lived Imperial Chinese dynasty. Preceded by the Southern and Northern Dynasties, it unified China for the first time after over a century of north-south division. The Sui Dynasty was followed by the Tang Dynasty, which ruled from June 18, 618 until June 1, 907 CE, when the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period began.

The Tang Dynasty was founded by the Li family, who seized power during the decline and collapse of the Sui Empire. The first half of the Tang Dynasty's rule was largely a period of progress and stability until the An Lushan Rebellion and subsequent decline of central authority in the later half of the dynasty. The dynasty was interrupted briefly by the Second Zhou Dynasty (October 8, 690 – March 3, 705), when Empress Wu Zetian seized the throne, becoming the only Chinese empress to reign in her own right. Chinese culture flourished and further matured during the Tang era, considered the greatest age for Chinese poetry. Architecture also greatly advanced during this time.

Architecture of the Tang Dynasty

Brick and Stone

Beginning in the Tang Dynasty, Chinese architecture has had a major influence on the architectural styles of Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. From the Tang Dynasty onward, brick and stone architecture gradually became more common and replaced wooden edifices. The earliest examples of this transition can be seen in building projects such as the Zhaozhou Bridge (completed in 605) or the Xumi Pagoda (built in 636). However, stone and brick architecture was used in the subterranean tomb architecture of earlier dynasties.

The Xumi Pagoda: This square-base stone and brick pagoda was built in the year 636 CE during the reign of Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It stands at a height of 48 m (157 ft) and has been well preserved since its initial construction. The monastery that once surrounded the pagoda, however, has largely been destroyed, with the exception of a few structures.

In the realm of structural engineering and technical Chinese architecture, government standard building codes were outlined in the early Tang book of the *Yingshan Ling* (National Building Law). Fragments of this book have survived in the *Tang Lü* (The Tang Code), while the Song dynasty architectural manual of the *Yingzao Fashi* (State Building Standards) by Li Jie in 1103 is the oldest existing technical treatise on Chinese architecture that has survived in full. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (712–756), 34,850 registered craftsmen served the state, managed by the Agency of Palace Buildings (Jingzuo Jian).

Tombs and Mausoleums

The tombs and mausoleums of imperial family members, such as the 8th century Tang Dynasty tombs at the Qianling Mausoleum , are counted as part of the imperial tradition in architecture. These above-ground earthen mounds and pyramids had subterranean shaft-and-vault structures lined with brick walls since at least the Warring States (481–221 BCE) period.

Temple Architecture

Buddhist temples were also commonplace in the Tang Dynasty, such as the Nanchan Temple near the town of Doucun on Wutaishan, in Shanxi Province. The temple was built in 782 CE, and its Great Buddha Hall is currently China's oldest preserved timber building extant, as wooden buildings are prone to fire and destruction. Not only is Nanchan Temple an important architectural site, it also contains an original set of artistically important Tang sculptures dating from the period of its construction. Seventeen sculptures share the hall's interior space with a small stone pagoda.

Nanchan Temple: Nanchan Temple, built during the late 8th century

As the oldest extant timber-frame building in China, The Great Buddha Hall is key to understanding Chinese architectural history. The humble building is a three- bay square hall 10 meters deep and 11.75 meters across the front. The roof is supported by twelve pillars implanted directly into a brick foundation, and the hip-gable roof is supported by brackets. The hall does not contain interior columns or a ceiling, nor are there struts supporting the roof in between the columns, which indicates that this is a low-status structure. The hall contains several features of Tang Dynasty halls, including its longer central front bay and the use of camel-hump braces.

Chang'an

Chang'an was the capital city of the Tang Dynasty as in the earlier Han and Jin dynasties. The roughly square city was built with six miles of outer walls running east to west and more than five miles of outer walls running north to south. The royal palace, the Taiji Palace, stood north of the city's central axis. From the large Mingde Gates located mid-center of the main southern wall, a wide city avenue stretched all the way north to the central administrative city, behind which was the Chentian Gate of the royal palace, or Imperial City. Intersecting this were numerous streets running east to west and north to south. These main intersecting roads formed 108 rectangular wards with walls and four gates each, each filled with multiple city blocks. The city was made famous for this checkerboard pattern of main roads with walled and gated districts.

Of these 108 wards in Chang'an, two (each the size of two regular city wards) were designated as government-supervised markets, and other spaces were reserved for temples, gardens, and ponds. Throughout the entire city, there were 111 Buddhist monasteries, 41 Daoist abbeys , 38 family shrines, two official temples, seven churches of foreign religions, 10 city wards with provincial transmission offices, 12 major inns, and six graveyards. Some city wards were filled with open public playing fields or the backyards of lavish mansions for playing horse polo and cuju football. In 662, Emperor Gaozong moved the imperial court to the Daming Palace, which became the political center of the empire and served as the royal residence of the Tang emperors for more than 220 years.

Painting during the Tang Dynasty

The Tang Dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese civilization, and Chinese figure painting developed dramatically during this time.

Learning Objectives

Describe the advancements of the "painting of people" style, the shuimohua style, the shan-shui style, and painting on architectural structures that occurred during the Tang Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Figure painting reached the height of elegant realism in the art of the court of Southern Tang (937-975).
- Buddhist painting and court painting—including paintings of the Buddha, monks, and nobles—played a major role in the development of painting.
- The landscape (*shan-shui*) painting technique developed quickly in this period and reached its first maturation.
- The painting of people also peaked. The outstanding master in this field is Wu Daozi , referred to as the “Sage of Painting.”

Key Terms

- **Wu Daozi**: (680–740) A Chinese artist of the Tang Dynasty, famous for initiating new myths in his artwork.
- **Wang Wei**: (699-759) A Tang Dynasty poet, musician, painter, and statesman; one of the most famous men of arts and letters of his time.

During the Tang Dynasty , considered a golden age in Chinese civilization , Chinese painting developed dramatically both in subject matter and technique. The advances that characterized Tang Dynasty painting had a lasting influence in the art of other countries, especially in East Asia (including Korea, Japan, and Vietnam) and central Asia.

Developments in Painting

During the early Tang period, the painting style was mainly inherited from the previous Sui Dynasty. The “painting of people” developed greatly during the Tang Dynasty, primarily due to paintings of the Buddha, monks, and nobles known as court paintings. Figure painting reached the height of elegant realism in the art of the court of Southern Tang (937-975). The theory of painting also developed during this time as Buddhism , Taoism , and traditional literature influenced the art form. Paintings on architectural structures, such as murals, ceiling paintings, cave paintings, and tomb paintings, were very popular, exemplified in the paintings of the Mogao Caves in Xinjiang.

Painting of People

Brothers Yan Liben and Yan Lide were among the most prolific painters of this period. Yan Liben was the personal portraitist to the Emperor Taizong, and his most notable works include the *Thirteen Emperors Scroll*.

Yan Liben, Thirteen Emperors Scroll (detail): Yan Liben was the personal portraitist to the Emperor Taizong.

The outstanding master in this field is Wu Daozi, referred to as the “Sage of Painting”. Wu’s works include *God Sending a Son* and *The Teaching Confucius*, and he created a new technique of drawing known as “Drawing of Water Shield.” Most Tang artists outlined figures with fine black lines and used brilliant colors and elaborate detail. However, Wu Daozi used only black ink and freely painted brushstrokes to create ink paintings that were so exciting, crowds gathered to watch him work. Ink paintings were no longer preliminary sketches or outlines to be filled in with color; instead, they were valued as finished works of art.

Wu Daozi, The Teaching Confucius (685-758): The painting of people peaked under the Tang Dynasty.

Landscapes

The great poet Wang Wei first created the brush and ink painting of *shan-shui*, literally “mountains and waters.” He also combined literature, especially poetry, with painting. The use of line in painting became much more calligraphic than in the early period. Li Sixun and Li Zhaodao (father and son) were the most famous painters of shan-shui. In these landscapes, which were monochromatic and sparse (a style that is collectively called *shuimohua*), the purpose was not to reproduce exactly the appearance of nature (the technique of realism) but rather to grasp an emotion or atmosphere so as to catch the “rhythm” of nature.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- 1024px-Nanchan_Temple_1.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_dynasty#/media/File:Nanchan_Temple_1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xumi Pagoda 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xumi_Pagoda_1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nanchan Temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanchan_Temple_(Wutai). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xumi Pagoda. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xumi_Pagoda. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sui Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sui_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tang Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/shaft. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Qianling Mausoleum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Qianling%20Mausoleum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Confucius Tang Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Confucius_Tang_Dynasty.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Chen Feidi Tang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chen_Feidi_Tang.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chinese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_painting%23Sui_and_Tang_dynasties_.28581.E2.80.93907.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tang Dynasty painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_Dynasty_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wu Daozi. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu%20Daozi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wang Wei. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang%20Wei. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.7: The Tang Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.8: The Song Dynasty

The Song Dynasty

The Song Dynasty was highly influenced by Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism, which were reflected in its art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the significance of Neo-Confucianism and literature on the art of the Song dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Advances in landscape and portrait painting heightened the visual arts during the Song Dynasty .
- The elite engaged in the arts as accepted pastimes of the cultured scholar-official, including painting, composing poetry, and writing calligraphy .
- Emperor Huizong was a renowned artist as well as a patron of the arts, and his court entourage included painters, calligraphers, poets, and storytellers.
- In philosophy, Chinese Buddhism had waned in influence, but it retained its hold on the arts and the charities of monasteries.
- Buddhism had a profound influence upon the budding movement of Neo- Confucianism , led by Cheng Yi (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi (1130–1200), which strongly influenced the art of the time.
- Different clothing styles distinguished peasants, soldiers, artisans, merchants, scholars, and officials.

Key Terms

- **Neo-Confucianism**: A moral, ethical, and metaphysical Chinese philosophy that originated with Han Yu and Li Ao (772-841) in the Tang Dynasty and became prominent during the Song and Ming dynasties.
- **Buddhism**: The religion and philosophy founded by the Indian teacher Gautama Buddha.
- **calligraphy**: The art of writing letters and words with decorative strokes.

The Song Dynasty ruled China between 960 and 1279 CE and is divided into two distinct periods, Northern and Southern. During the Northern Song (960–1127), the capital was in the northern city of Bianjing (now Kaifeng) and the dynasty controlled most of what is now Eastern China. The Southern Song (1127–1279) refers to the period after the Song lost control of its northern half to the Jurchen Jin dynasty in the Jin-Song Wars.

The Song dynasty restored unity and became the richest, most skilled, and most populous country on earth. The population doubled in size during the 10th and 11th centuries, growth made possible by expanded rice cultivation in central and southern Song, the use of early-ripening rice from southeast and southern Asia, and widespread food surplus. The Song was the first government in world history to issue banknotes or paper money and the first Chinese government to establish a permanent navy.

The Proliferation of Art

Social life during the Song Dynasty was vibrant. Citizens gathered to view and trade precious artworks, the populace intermingled at public festivals and private clubs, and cities had lively entertainment quarters. The spread of literature and knowledge was enhanced by the rapid expansion of woodblock printing and the 11th-century invention of movable-type printing. Technology, science, philosophy, mathematics, and engineering flourished over the course of the Song. Philosophers such as Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi reinvigorated Confucianism with new commentary, infused with Buddhist ideals and emphasized a new organization of classic texts that brought out the core doctrine of Neo-Confucianism. The visual arts were heightened by new developments such as advances in landscape and portrait painting, and the elite engaged in the arts as accepted pastimes of the cultured scholar-official, including painting, composing poetry, and writing calligraphy.

The imperial courts of the emperor’s palace were filled with his entourage of court painters, calligraphers, poets, and storytellers. Emperor Huizong was a renowned artist as well as a patron of the arts. One venerated court painter was Zhang Zeduan (1085–

1145), who painted an enormous panoramic painting, *Along the River During the Qingming Festival.* Emperor Gaozong initiated a massive art project during his reign, known as the Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute, from the life story of Cai Wenji (b. 177).

The Significance of Literature in Art

Poet and statesman Su Shi and his associate Mi Fu were highly influential in the development of literature during the Song era. Poetry and literature profited from the rising popularity and development of the ci form , a type of lyric poetry. Enormous encyclopedic volumes were compiled, such as works of historiography and treatises on technical subjects. Chinese travel literature also became popular with the writings of geographer Fan Chengda (1126–1193) and Su Shi, the latter of whom wrote the daytrip essay known as *Record of Stone Bell Mountain* that used persuasive writing to argue a philosophical point. Although an early form of the local geographic gazetteer existed in China since the 1st century, the matured form known as "treatise on a place,, or *fangzhi*, replaced the old "map guide", or *tujing*, during the Song Dynasty.

The Influence of Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism

In philosophy, Chinese Buddhism had waned in influence, but it retained its hold on the arts and on the charities of monasteries. Buddhism also had a profound influence upon the budding movement of Neo-Confucianism, led by Cheng Yi (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi (1130–1200). Neo-Confucianism was an attempt to create a more rationalist and secular form of Confucianism by rejecting superstitious and mystical elements of Taoism and Buddhism that influenced the philosophy during and after the Han Dynasty. Although the Neo-Confucianists were critical of Taoism and Buddhism, the two did have an influence on the philosophy, and the Neo-Confucianists borrowed terms and concepts from both. However, unlike the Buddhists and Taoists, who saw metaphysics as a catalyst for spiritual development, religious enlightenment , and immortality, the Neo-Confucianists used metaphysics to develop a rationalist ethical philosophy.

Mahayana Buddhism influenced Fan Zhongyan and Wang Anshi through its concept of ethical universalism, while Buddhist metaphysics had a deep impact upon the pre- Neo- Confucian doctrine of Cheng Yi. The philosophical work of Cheng Yi in turn influenced Zhu Xi. Although his contemporary peers did not accept his writings, Zhu's commentary and emphasis upon the Confucian classics of the Four Books as an introductory corpus to Confucian learning formed the basis of the Neo-Confucian doctrine. By the year 1241, under the sponsorship of Emperor Lizong, Zhu Xi's Four Books and his commentary became standard requirements of study for those attempting to pass the civil service examinations.

Wood Bodhisattva: A wooden and gilded statue of the Buddha (bodhisattva) from the Chinese Song Dynasty (960-1279), from the Shanghai Museum.

The influence of both Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism can be seen in much of the artwork at the time, including the painted artwork of Lin Tinggui's *Luohan Laundering.* A well-known Neo-Confucian motif includes paintings of Confucius , Buddha, and Lao Tzu all drinking out of the same vinegar jar, associated with the slogan "The three teachings are one!" However, the ideology of Buddhism was highly criticized and even scorned by some. The statesman and historian Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) called the religion a "curse" that could only be remedied by uprooting it from Chinese culture and replacing it with Confucian discourse. Buddhism would not see a true revival in Chinese society until the Mongol rule of the Yuan Dynasty , with Kublai Khan's

sponsorship of Tibetan Buddhism and Drogön Chögyal Phagpa as the leading lama. The Christian sect of Nestorianism—which entered China in the Tang era—was also revived in China under Mongol rule.

Portrait of the Zen Buddhist monk Wuzhun Shifan (1238): Portrait of the Zen Buddhist monk Wuzhun Shifan, painted in 1238.

The Art of Clothing

Clothing was made of hemp or cotton cloths in either black and white. Trousers were acceptable for peasants, soldiers, artisans, and merchants, although wealthy merchants might choose to wear more ornate clothing and male blouses that came below the waist. Acceptable apparel for scholar-officials was rigidly defined by social ranking system. Each official was able to display his status by wearing different-colored traditional silken robes that hung to the ground around his feet, specific types of headgear, and even specific styles of girdles that displayed his graded-rank of officialdom.
However, as time went on this rule of rank-graded apparel for officials was not as strictly enforced.

Women wore long dresses, blouses that came down to the knee, skirts, and jackets with long or short sleeves, while women from wealthy families could wear purple scarves around their shoulders. The main difference in women's apparel from that of men was that it was fastened on the left, not on the right.

Painting under the Song Dynasty

Painting during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) reached a new level of sophistication with further development of landscape painting.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Northern and Southern Song styles of painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The shan shui style painting—"shan" meaning mountain, and "shui" meaning river—became prominent in Chinese landscape art. Distant mountain peaks rise out of high clouds and mist, while streaming rivers run from afar into the foreground.

- The Northern Song period (960–1127) was characterized by large, sweeping landscapes, influenced by political ideals of bringing order to large societal issues.
- In contrast , the Southern Song period (1127–1279) was more interested in reforming society from the bottom up and on a much smaller scale, and their paintings reflected this in smaller, more intimate scenes.
- The imperial courts of the emperor's palace were filled with his entourage of court painters, calligraphers, poets, and storytellers. One of the greatest landscape painters of the court was Zhang Zeduan , who painted the original *Along the River During Qingming Festival* scroll.

Key Terms

- **Taoism**: A Chinese mystical philosophy traditionally founded by Lao-tzu in the 6th century BCE that teaches conformity to the tao by unassertive action and simplicity.
- **Zhang Zeduan**: (1085–1145) A famous Chinese painter of the Song Dynasty, who lived during the transitional period from the Northern Song to the Southern Song and was instrumental in the early history of the Chinese landscape art style known as shan shui.
- **Neo-Confucian**: A moral, ethical, and metaphysical Chinese philosophy that originated with Han Yu and Li Ao (772-841) in the Tang Dynasty and became prominent during the Song and Ming dynasties.

Introduction

***Snow Mountains* by Guo Xi, located in the Shanghai Museum.**: Guo Xi, a representative landscape painter in the Northern Song dynasty, is known for depicting mountains, rivers, and forests in winter. This piece shows a of deep and serene mountain valley covered with snow and several old trees struggling to survive on precipitous cliffs. This masterpiece uses light ink and

magnificent composition to express his open artistic conception.

Painting during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) reached a new level of sophistication with further development of landscape painting. The *shan shui* style painting—"shan" meaning mountain and "shui" meaning river—became prominent in Chinese landscape art. The emphasis on landscape painting in the Song period was grounded in Chinese philosophy. Taoism stressed that humans were but tiny specks among vast and greater cosmos, while Neo-Confucianist writers often pursued the discovery of patterns and principles that they believed caused all social and natural phenomena. While the painting of portraits and closely viewed objects such as birds on branches were held in high esteem by the Song Chinese, landscape painting was paramount.

Techniques

Artists of the time mastered the formula of intricate and realistic scenes in the foreground and vast open space in the background. Distant mountain peaks rise out of high clouds and mist, while streaming rivers run from afar into the foreground. Immeasurable distances are conveyed through blurred outlines and impressionistic treatment of natural phenomena.

Northern and Southern Song

There was a significant difference in painting trends between the Northern Song period (960–1127) and Southern Song period (1127–1279). The paintings of Northern Song officials were influenced by their political ideals of bringing order to the world and tackling the largest issues affecting the whole of their society; as such, their paintings often depict huge, sweeping landscapes. On the other hand, Southern Song officials were more interested in reforming society from the bottom up and on a much smaller scale, a method they believed had a better chance for success. Their paintings often focus on smaller, more intimate scenes, while the background is bereft of detail as a realm without substance or concern for the artist or viewer .

This change in attitude from one era to the next stemmed from the rising influence of Neo-Confucian philosophy. Adherents to Neo-Confucianism focused on reforming society from the bottom up, not the top down, which can be seen in their efforts to promote small private academies during the Southern Song instead of the large state-controlled academies seen in the Northern Song era.

Ma Lin, Listening to the Wind (1246): Southern Song officials were interested in reforming society from the bottom up and on a small scale. Hence, their paintings often focused on small, visually closer, and more intimate scenes, while the background was often depicted as bereft of detail as a realm without substance or concern for the artist or viewer.

Influential Painters

Ma Yuan and Xia Gui

Ma Yuan was a Southern Song painter of the Song Dynasty. His works and those of Xia Gui formed the basis of the so-called Ma-Xia school of painting and are considered among the finest from the period. Although a very versatile painter, Ma is known today primarily for his landscape scrolls. A characteristic feature of his paintings is the so-called “one-corner” composition , in which the actual subjects of the painting are pushed to a corner or a side, leaving vast open spaces. As court painters, Ma Yuan and Xia Gui used strong black brushstrokes to sketch trees and rocks and pale washes to suggest misty space.

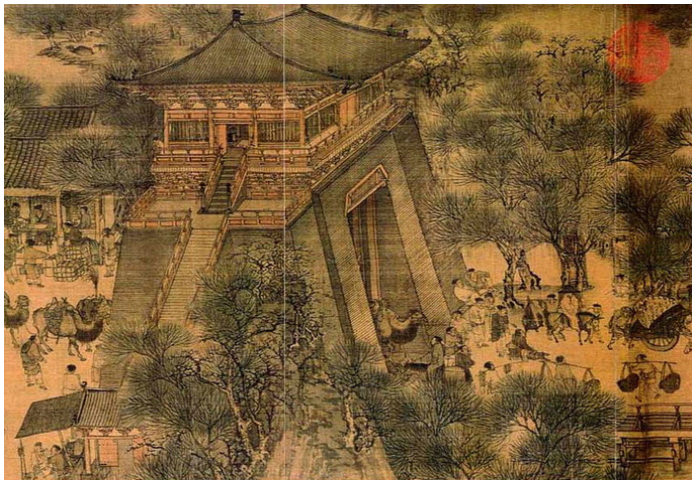
Walking on Path in Spring by Ma Yuan (马远 c.1190 – 1279年）): Ma Yuan was one of the most prominent Chinese painters of the Song Dynasty.

Su Shi and Mi Fu

Painting became an art of high sophistication, associated with the gentry class as one of their main artistic pastimes along with calligraphy and poetry. During the Song Dynasty, avid art collectors often met in groups to discuss their own paintings and rate those of colleagues and friends. The poet and statesman Su Shi (1037–1101) and his accomplice Mi Fu (1051–1107) often partook in these affairs, borrowing art pieces to study, copy, or exchange. They created a new kind of art that used their skills in calligraphy to make ink paintings. From this time onward, many painters strove to freely express their feelings and capture the inner spirit of their subject instead of depicting its outward appearance. The small round paintings popular in the Southern Song were often collected into albums, with poets creating compositions on the side to match the theme and mood of the painting.

Zhang Zeduan, Yi Yuanji, and Other Court Painters

The imperial courts of the emperor's palace were filled with his entourage of court painters, calligraphers, poets, and storytellers. One of the greatest landscape painters given patronage by the Song court was Zhang Zeduan (1085–1145), who painted the original *Along the River During Qingming Festival* scroll, one of the most well-known masterpieces of Chinese visual art. Emperor Gaozong of Song (1127–1162) commissioned an art project of numerous paintings for the *Eighteen Songs of a NomadFlute*, based on the poet Cai Wenji (177–250 AD) of the earlier Han Dynasty. Yi Yuanji achieved a high degree of realism painting animals, in particular monkeys and gibbons.



Detail of the original "Along the River during Qingming Festival" by Zhang Zeduan, early 12th century: Zhang Zeduan was instrumental in the early history of the Chinese landscape art style known as shan shui. Zhang's original painting of the *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* reveals much about life in China during the 11th-12th century. Its depiction of different people interacting with one another reveals the nuances of class structure and the many hardships of urban life. It also displays accurate depictions of technological practices found in Song China.

Ceramics under the Song Dynasty

Ceramics from the Southern Song dynasty focused primarily on small, intimate scenes.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish the characteristics of painting and ceramics in the Southern Song style from its counterpart in the North

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) was a culturally rich and sophisticated age for China. Great advancements were made in the ceramics , painting, and other visual arts.
- In 1004, Emperor Zhenzong established the city of Jingdezhen as the main production hub for imperial porcelain ; during the Song and following Yuan dynasties , porcelain made in the city and other southern Chinese kiln sites used crushed and refined pottery stones alone.

- The making of glazed and translucent porcelain and celadon wares with complex use of enamel was highly developed during the Song period. Longquan celadon wares were particularly popular.
- Black and red lacquerwares of the Song period featured beautifully carved artwork of miniature nature scenes, landscapes, or decorative motifs .
- Trends in illustration styles among the gentry shifted from the Northern (960–1127) to Southern Song (1127–1279) periods, influenced in part by the gradual embrace of the Neo-Confucian political ideology at court.

Key Terms

- **celadon**: A term for ceramics denoting both wares glazed in the jade green color (also known as greenware) and a type of transparent glaze, often with small cracks, that was first used on greenware but later used on other porcelains.
- **Neo-Confucianism**: A moral, ethical, and metaphysical Chinese philosophy that originated with Han Yu and Li Ao (772-841) in the Tang Dynasty and became prominent during the Song and Ming dynasties.
- **shan shui style**: A style of Chinese painting that depicts scenery or natural landscapes such as mountains, rivers, and waterfalls, using brush and ink rather than conventional paints.

The Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) was a culturally rich and sophisticated age for China. Great advancements were made in the visual arts, music, literature, and philosophy. Officials of the ruling bureaucracy reached new heights of education in Chinese society, while general culture was enhanced by widespread printing, growing literacy, and various arts.

Advances in Ceramics

Appreciation of the arts among the gentry flourished during the Song Dynasty, especially in painting and ceramics. The city of Jingdezhen (also Jingde Zhen) has been a central place of production of ceramics since the early Han dynasty; in 1004, Emperor Zhenzong established the city as the main production hub for imperial porcelain. During the Song and following Yuan dynasties, porcelain made in the city and other southern Chinese kiln sites used crushed and refined pottery stones.

Porcelains from the Song Dynasty: *Left item:* A Northern Song qingbai-ware vase with a transparent blue-toned ceramic glaze, from Jingdezhen, 11th century. *Center item:* A Northern or Southern Song qingbai-ware bowl with incised lotus decorations, a metal rim, and a transparent blue-toned glaze, from Jingdezhen, 12th or 13th century; *Right item:* A Southern Song miniature model of a granary with removable top lid and doorway, qingbai porcelain with transparent blue-toned glaze, Jingdezhen, 13th century.

Longquan Celadon

The making of glazed translucent porcelain and celadon wares with complex use of enamels became highly developed during the Song period. Longquan celadon wares were particularly popular. These were produced in kilns in the city of Longquan, located in Lishui prefecture in southwestern Zhejiang Province. More than 200 kiln sites have been discovered in Longquan, comprising one of the largest historical ceramic producing areas in China. Southern Song celadons display a great variety of shape and glaze color, and Japanese tea masters and collectors have treasured examples with a distinctive bluish glaze termed *kinutaseiji*. Chinese collectors have noted a greater variety of Longquan ware and devised a special vocabulary to describe them, such as *meizi ching* or

“plum green” celadon. After the end of the Southern Song period, Longquan celadon experienced expanded production and lessened quality.

Longquan celadon ware vase: A Longquan ware celadon vase, Song Dynasty, 13th century, from the Nantoyōsō Collection, Japan.

Illustrations

Black and red lacquerwares of the Song period featured beautifully carved artwork of miniature nature scenes, landscapes, or decorative motifs. Trends in illustration styles among the gentry shifted from the Northern (960–1127) to Southern Song (1127–1279) periods, influenced in part by the gradual embrace of the Neo-Confucian political ideology at court. Even though intricate ceramics and lacquerware, often painted with closely-viewed objects like birds on branches, were held in high esteem by the Song Chinese, landscape painting was paramount during this era.

Song Dynasty ding ware porcelain bottle, 11th century: The making of glazed and translucent porcelain and celadon wares with complex use of enamels was developed further during the Song period.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Wood Bodhisattva. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wood_Bodhisattva.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinesischer Maler von 1238 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chinesischer_Maler_von_1238_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Song Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Dynasty%23Arts.2C_literature.2C_and_philosophy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-Confucianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Confucianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Song Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-Confucianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Confucianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Buddhism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Buddhism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-Ma_Yuan_Walking_on_Path_in_Spring.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma_Yuan_(painter)#/media/File:Ma_Yuan_Walking_on_Path_in_Spring.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ma-lin-001.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ma_Lin_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Deep Valley. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Deep_Valley.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bianjing city gate. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bianjing_city_gate.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Song Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Dynasty%23Arts.2C_literature.2C_and_philosophy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_painting%23Song_and_Yuan_dynasties_.28960.E2.80.931368.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ma Yuan (painter). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma_Yuan_(painter). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-Confucian. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Confucian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zhang Zeduan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang%20Zeduan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Taoism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Taoism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Song_Dynasty_Celadon_Vase.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Longquan_celadon#/media/File:Song_Dynasty_Celadon_Vase.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Song Dynasty Porcelain Bottle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Song_Dynasty_Porcelain_Bottle.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Song_Dynasty_Porcelain.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_dynasty#/media/File:Song_Dynasty_Porcelain.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chinese Ceramics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_ceramics#Song_and_Yuan_dynasties.2C_960.E2.80.931368. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- shan shui style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/shan%20shui%20style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Longquan Celadon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Longquan_celadon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of the Song Dynasty. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_the_Song_Dynasty. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-Confucianism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Confucianism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.8: The Song Dynasty is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

23.9: Korea

Three Kingdoms Period

The Three Kingdoms of Korea included the Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla Kingdoms from roughly the first century BCE to the 7th century CE.

Learning Objectives

Outline the Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla periods that made up Korea's Three Kingdoms

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The concept of the Three Kingdoms of Korea refers to the kingdoms of Goguryeo (37 BCE – 668 CE), Baekje (18 BCE – 660 CE), and Silla (57 BCE – 935 CE).
- The Baekje and Silla Kingdoms dominated the southern part of the peninsula, while the Goguryeo Kingdom controlled the Liaodong Peninsula, Manchuria, and the northern half of the Korean Peninsula.
- The spread of Buddhism inspired the Goguryeo kings to commission art and architecture dedicated to the Buddha.
- Baekje Buddhist sculpture is characterized by its naturalness, warmth, and harmonious proportions that exhibit a unique Korean style .
- In the 7th century, allied with China under Tang dynasty , Silla unified the Korean Peninsula for the first time in Korean history, forming a national identity.

Key Terms

- **archaic**: Of or characterized by antiquity; old-fashioned, quaint, antiquated.
- **Silk Road**: An ancient network of trade routes which for centuries were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent, connecting the West and East from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

The concept of the Three Kingdoms of Korea refers to Goguryeo (37 BCE – 668 CE; later known as Goryeo, from which the name Korea is derived), Baekje (18 BCE – 660 CE), and Silla (57 BCE – 935 CE). The three kingdoms occupied parts of Manchuria, present-day China and Russia, and the Korean Peninsula. The Baekje and Silla Kingdoms dominated the southern part of the peninsula while the Goguryeo Kingdom controlled the Liaodong Peninsula, Manchuria, and the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. In the 7th century, allied with China under Tang dynasty, Silla unified the Korean Peninsula for the first time in Korean history, forming a national identity.

After the fall of Goguryeo and Baekje, the Tang dynasty established a short-lived military government to administer parts of the Korean peninsula. However, as a result of the Silla-Tang Wars (670–676 CE), Silla forces expelled the Protectorate armies from the peninsula in 676. All three kingdoms shared a similar culture and language. Their original religions were shamanistic, but were increasingly influenced by Chinese culture, particularly Confucianism and Taoism . In the 4th century, Buddhism was introduced to the peninsula and spread rapidly, briefly becoming the official religion of all three kingdoms.

Goguryeo

Goguryeo was located in the northern and central parts of the Korean Peninsula and the southern and central parts of inner and outer Manchuria. The Kingdom was an active participant in the power struggle for control of the Korean peninsula and was also associated with the foreign affairs of neighboring polities in China and Japan. Goguryeo was a powerful empire and one of the great powers in East Asia until it was defeated by a Silla–Tang China alliance in 668. After its fall, its territory was divided among the states of Later Silla, Balhae, and Tang China.

Art in Goguryeo

Buddhism was introduced to Goguryeo in 372 CE because of its proximity to the northern Chinese states such as the Northern Wei. Buddhism inspired the Goguryeo kings to commission art and architecture dedicated to the Buddha. Notable aspects of Goguryeo

art include tomb murals that vividly depict everyday aspects of life in the ancient kingdom as well as its culture. Goguryeo painting was influential in East Asia, including Japan, as seen in the wall murals of Horyu-ji. Mural painting spread to the Baekje and Silla kingdoms as well. The murals portray Buddhist themes and provide valuable insight into the kingdom, such as knowledge about architecture and clothing. These murals also marked the early beginnings of Korean landscape paintings and portraiture.

Goguryeo Moon: A Goguryeo tomb mural.

Baekje

Baekje, located in southwest Korea, alternately battled and allied with Goguryeo and Silla as the three kingdoms expanded control over the peninsula. At its peak in the 4th century, Baekje controlled most of the western Korean peninsula, expanded as far north as Pyongyang, and may have even held territories in China. It became a significant regional sea power with political and trade relations with China and Japan.

Art in Baekje

Baekje is considered the kingdom with the greatest art among the three states; it also introduced a significant Korean influence into the art of Japan. Baekje Buddhist sculpture is characterized by its naturalness, warmth, and harmonious proportions that exhibit a unique Korean style. Another example of Korean influence is the use of the distinctive “Baekje smile,” a mysterious expression found on many Baekje statutes. While there are no surviving examples of wooden architecture, the Mireuksa site holds the foundation stones of a destroyed temple and two surviving granite pagodas , suggesting what Baekje architecture may have looked like. The tomb of King Muryeong also held a number of artifacts preserved from the Baekje era, including flame-like gold pins, gilt-bronze shoes, gold girdles (a symbol of royalty), and swords with gold hilts decorated with dragons and phoenixes.

Silla

The Silla Kingdom was the most isolated from the Korean peninsula because it was situated in the southeast; the kingdom was also the last to adopt Buddhism and foreign cultural influences. Silla eventually conquered the other two kingdoms, Baekje in 660 and Goguryeo in 668. Thereafter, Unified Silla (or Later Silla) occupied most of the Korean Peninsula, while the northern part re-emerged as Balhae, a successor-state of Goguryeo. After nearly 1,000 years of rule, Silla fragmented into the brief Later Three Kingdoms, Silla, Hubaekje, and Taebong, handing over power to its successor dynasty Goryeo in 935.

Art in Silla

The Silla Kingdom tombs were mostly inaccessible to looters, so many examples of Korean art have been preserved. The Silla craftsmen were famed for their gold-crafting ability, which has similarities to Etruscan and Greek techniques as exemplified by gold earrings and crowns. Silla crowns were made from pure gold and had tree and antler-like adornments, suggesting a shamanistic tradition. Because Silla gold artifacts bear similarities to European techniques and glass and beads depicting blue-eyed people were found in royal tombs, many believe the Silk Road extended all the way to Korea.

Architecture and Art in the Unified Silla Period

The Silla craftsmen were famed for their gold-crafting ability and Buddhist architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the gold-crafting, Seokguram grotto, and Bulguksa temple of the Unified Silla Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Silla craftsmen were famed for their gold-crafting ability, which shares similarities with Etruscan and Greek techniques as exemplified by gold earrings and crowns.
- The most notable objects of Silla art are its crowns made from pure gold. They have tree and antler-like adornments, suggesting a shamanistic tradition.
- Unified Silla was a time of great artistic output in Korea, especially in Buddhist art. Famous examples include the Seokguram grotto and the Bulguksa temple.
- Bulguksa is a head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in the North Gyeongsang province in South Korea, home to seven national treasures .
- The Seokguram Grotto is a hermitage and part of the Bulguksa temple complex, exemplifying some of the best Buddhist sculptures in the world.

Key Terms

- **hermitage**: A house or dwelling where a hermit lives.

The Silla Kingdom was the most isolated of the Three Kingdoms Period because it was situated in the southeast part of the peninsula. As such, the kingdom was the last to adopt Buddhism and foreign cultural influences. Silla eventually conquered the other two kingdoms, Baekje in 660 and Goguryeo in 668; thereafter, Unified Silla occupied most of the Korean Peninsula for close to 1,000 years.

Unified Silla Art

Unified Silla was a time of great artistic output in Korea, especially in Buddhist art. Because Silla Kingdom tombs were mostly inaccessible to looters, many examples of Korean art have survived from this era. The Silla craftsmen were famed for their gold-crafting ability, which shares similarities with Etruscan and Greek techniques as exemplified by gold earrings and crowns. Silla gold crows were made from pure gold and had tree and antler-like adornments, suggesting a shamanistic tradition. Because Silla gold artifacts bear similarities to European techniques—and because glass and beads depicting blue-eyed people were found in royal tombs—many believe that the Silk Road extended all the way to Korea.

Examples of Unified Silla art include the Seokguram grotto and the Bulguksa temple. Two pagodas on the ground , the Seokgatap and Dabotap, are also unique examples of Silla masonry and artistry. Craftsmen created massive temple bells, reliquaries , and statutes. The capital city of Unified Silla was nicknamed the “city of gold” because of the use of gold in many objects of art.

Bulguksa Temple

Bulguksa is a head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in the North Gyeongsang province in South Korea. It is home to seven national treasures, including the Dabotap and Seokgatap stone pagodas, Cheongun-gyo (Blue Cloud Bridge), and two gilt-bronze statues of Buddha. The temple is classified as Historic and Scenic Site No. 1 by the South Korean government, and in 1995, Bulguksa was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List together with the Seokguram Grotto.

The entrance to the temple, Sokgyemun, has a double-sectioned staircase and bridge that leads to the inside of the temple compound. The stairway is 33 steps high, corresponding to the 33 steps to enlightenment . There are two pagodas on the temple site, which is unusual. The three-story Seokgatap (Sakyamuni Pagoda), which stands at 8.2 meters, is a traditional Korean-style stone pagoda with simple lines and minimal detailing. Dabotap (Many Treasure Pagoda) is 10.4 meters tall and dedicated to the Many Treasures Buddha mentioned in the Lotus Sutra . In contrast to Seokgatap, Dabotap is known for its highly ornate structure.

Daeungjeon, the Hall of Great Enlightenment, is the main hall, which enshrines the Sakyamuni Buddha and was first built in 681. Behind the main hall stands Museoljeon, the Hall of No Words, which gets its name from the belief that Buddha’s teachings could not be taught by words alone. It is one of the oldest buildings in the complex and was probably first built in 670. The Gwaneumjeon (Avalokitesvara’s Shrine) houses an image of the Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Perfect Compassion, and stands at the highest point of the complex.

Bulguksa Temple: Together with the Seokguram Grotto, the Bulguksa Temple was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995.

Seokguram Grotto

The Seokguram Grotto is a hermitage and part of the Bulguksa temple complex. It lies four kilometers east of the Bulguksa temple on Mt. Tohamsan, in Gyeongju, South Korea. The grotto overlooks the East Sea (Sea of Japan) and rests 750 meters above sea level. It is classified as National Treasure No. 24 by the South Korean government, and in 1995 it was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List together with the Bulguksa Temple. It exemplifies some of the best Buddhist sculptures in the world.

An India tradition of carving the image of Buddha in stone and stupas in cliff walls and natural caves spread to China and Korea. The geology of the Korean Peninsula, which contains an abundance of hard granite, is not conducive to carving stone images into cliff walls, and so Seokguram is an artificial grotto made from granite and is unique in design. The small size of the grotto indicates that it was probably used exclusively by the Silla royalty.

The grotto is symbolic of a spiritual journey into Nirvana. Pilgrims were to start at Bulguksa or at the foot of Mt. Tohamsan, a holy mountain to the Silla. There was a fountain at the entrance of the shrine where pilgrims could refresh themselves. Inside the grotto, the antechamber and corridor represented the earth while the rotunda represented heaven. The grotto is shaped by hundreds of granite stones; no mortar was used and the structure was held together instead by stone rivets . The construction of the grotto also utilized natural ventilation.

The basic layout of the grotto includes an arched entrance which leads into a rectangular antechamber and then a narrow corridor lined with bas-reliefs leading into the main rotunda. The centerpiece of the granite sanctuary is a Buddha statue seated on a lotus throne with legs crossed. The Buddha has a serene expression of meditation; it is surrounded by fifteen panels of bodhisattvas, arhats, and ancient Indian gods and accompanied by ten statues in niches along the rotunda wall. The grotto also contains 40 different figures representing Buddhist principles and teachings; the grotto itself was built around these statues in order to protect them from weathering. The ceiling of the grotto is decorated with half moons, and the top is decorated with a lotus flower. Silla architects used symmetry and employed the concept of the golden rectangle.

Seokguram Buddha: Buddha at Seokguram in South Korea, World Heritage picture.

The Gorguryeo Tombs

Notable aspects of Goguryeo art can be found in tomb murals that vividly depict everyday aspects of life in the ancient kingdom.

Learning Objectives

Describe the famous tomb murals of the Goryeo Dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Goguryeo Kingdom, which ruled from 37 BCE–668 CE, spanned much of Manchuria and the northern half of Korea.
- Because of its proximity to the northern Chinese states such as the Northern Wei, Buddhism was first introduced to the Goguryeo Kingdom in 372 CE. Buddhism inspired the Goguryeo kings to commission art and architecture dedicated to the Buddha.
- Notable aspects of art from this kingdom can be found in the Complex of Goguryeo Tombs, which was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.
- It is thought that the complex was used as a burial site for kings, queens, and other members of the royal family.
- Tomb murals vividly depict everyday aspects of life and culture in the ancient kingdom, and Goguryeo painting was highly influential to other art throughout East Asia, including the wall murals of Horyu-ji in Japan.
- Goguryeo tomb paintings are noted for their vigor, imagery , detail, and originality.

Key Terms

- **artifact**: An object such as a tool, weapon or ornament of archaeological or historical interest, especially such an object found at an archaeological excavation.

Background: The Goguryeo Kingdom

The Goguryeo Kingdom, which ruled from 37 BCE–668 CE, spanned much of Manchuria and the northern half of Korea. Goguryeo was an active participant in the power struggle for control of the Korean peninsula and was also associated with the foreign affairs of neighboring polities in China and Japan. Goguryeo was a powerful empire and one of the great powers in East Asia until it was defeated by a Silla–Tang China alliance in 668. After its fall, the territory was divided among the states of Later Silla, Balhae and Tang China.

Because of its proximity to the northern Chinese states such as the Northern Wei, Buddhism was first introduced to the Goguryeo Kingdom in 372 CE. Buddhism inspired the Goguryeo kings to commission art and architecture dedicated to the Buddha.

Goguryeo Tombs

Notable aspects of art from this kingdom can be found in the Complex of Goguryeo Tombs, designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is thought the complex was used as a burial site for kings, queens and other members of the royal family. Tomb murals vividly depict everyday aspects of life and culture in the ancient kingdom, and Goguryeo painting was highly influential to other art throughout East Asia, including the wall murals of Horyu-ji in Japan. Goguryeo tomb paintings are noted for their vigor, imagery, detail, and originality.

While looting of the tombs has left little physical evidence of the kingdom, the murals portray varied Buddhist themes and provide valuable insight into the kingdom, including details such as its architecture and clothing. These murals also illustrate the early beginnings of Korean landscape paintings and portraiture. The murals are strongly colored and depict people of Goguryeo dancing, wearing elaborate white dresses, enjoying festivities such as the annual Dongmaeng Festival (held in October to worship the gods and ancestors), and hunting. Religious practices, from Buddhism to traditional mythologies, are also illustrated. The people of Goguryeo worshiped ancestors and considered mythical beasts and animals to be sacred, frequently depicting them in tomb paintings. The phoenix and dragon were both worshiped, while the Samjogo, the three-legged crow that represented the sun, was considered the most powerful of the three.

Goguryeo Mural Art: The murals of Goguryeo are strongly colored and show daily life and Korean mythologies of the time.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Goguryeo moon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Goguryeo_moon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Goguryeo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Goguryeo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Three Kingdoms of Korea. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Kingdoms_of_Korea. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baekje. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baekje. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Silla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Silla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Korea. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea%23Culture_and_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- archaic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/archaic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bulguk_Tempel.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulguksa#/media/File:Bulguk_Tempel.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Seokguram Buddha. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Seokguram_Buddha.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Seokguram. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Seokguram. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bulguksa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulguksa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Korean art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_art%23Unified_Silla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- hermitage. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hermitage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Goguryeo-Gakjeochong-Ssireumdo-01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Goguryeo-Gakjeochong-Ssireumdo-01.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Complex of Goguryeo Tombs. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Complex_of_Goguryeo_Tombs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Goguryeo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Goguryeo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- artifact. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/artifact. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 23.9: Korea is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

24: Japan After 1333 CE

24.1: The Muromachi Period

24.2: The Momoyama Period

24.3: The Edo Period

24.4: The Modern Period

This page titled 24: Japan After 1333 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

24.1: The Muromachi Period

Zen Ink Painting

During the Muromachi period (1333–1578), Zen Buddhism played an influential role in the development of Zen ink painting in Japan.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish the techniques of the Yamato-e, Sumi-e, Sansuiga, and Shigajiku styles of Japanese Zen Ink painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The development of the great Zen monasteries in Kamakura and Kyoto had a great influence on the visual arts of the Muromachi period.
- The foremost painter of the new Sumi-e style was Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506), whose most dramatic works were completed in the Chinese splashed-ink (Haboku) style.
- The Sumi-e style was highly influenced by calligraphy, employing the same tools and style as well as its Zen philosophy.
- By the end of the 14th century, monochrome landscape paintings (sansuiga) had found patronage by the ruling Ashikaga family and were the preferred genre among Zen painters, gradually evolving from its Chinese roots to a more Japanese style.
- Another style that developed during the Muromachi period was Shigajiku (詩), or paintings accompanied by poetry; this style had its roots in China, where painting and poetry were seen as inherently connected.

Key Terms

- **calligraphy**: The art of writing letters and words with decorative strokes.
- **Koan**: A story, dialogue, question, or statement, which is used in Zen practice to provoke the “great doubt” and test a student’s progress.
- **shogunate**: A hereditary military dictator in Japan during the period from 1185 to 1868 (with exceptions).

Background: The Muromachi Period

During the Muromachi period (1333–1578), also known as the Ashikaga period, a profound change took place in Japanese culture. The Ashikaga clan took control of the shogunate and moved its headquarters back to Kyoto, to the Muromachi district of the city. With the return of government to the capital, the popularizing trends of the Kamakura period came to an end, and cultural expression took on a more aristocratic, elitist character. During the Muromachi Period, Zen Buddhism rose to prominence—especially among the elite Samurai class, who embraced the Zen values of personal discipline, concentration, and self-development.

Impact on the Arts

The establishment of the great Zen monasteries in Kamakura and Kyoto had a major impact on the visual arts. Because of secular ventures and trading missions to China organized by Zen temples, many Chinese paintings and objects of art were imported into Japan, profoundly influencing Japanese artists working for Zen temples and the shogunate. These imports not only changed the subject matter of painting, but they also modified the use of color; the bright colors of Yamato-e yielded to the monochromes of painting in the Chinese manner of Sui-boku-ga (水) or Sumi-e (墨). This style mainly used only black ink—the same as used in East Asian calligraphy.

Sesshū Tōyō and the Haboku Style

The foremost painter of the new Sumi-e style was Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506), a Rinzai priest who traveled to China in 1468–69 and studied contemporary Ming painting. Some of his most dramatic works are in the Chinese splashed-ink (Haboku) style. Upon

returning to Japan, Sesshū built himself a studio and established a large following; these painters are now referred to as the Unkoku-rin school or School of Sesshū.

To make one of the calligraphic and highly stylized Haboku paintings, the painter would visualize the image and then make swift broad strokes onto the paper, resulting in a splashed and abstract composition. This was all done with meditative concentration. This impressionistic style of painting was supposed to capture the true nature of the subject. The Sumi-e style was highly influenced by calligraphy, using the same tools and style as well as its Zen philosophy. To paint in this style, the practitioner had to clear his mind and apply the brushstrokes without too much thinking, termed *mushin* (無) by the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro. The concept of mushin is central to many Japanese arts, including the art of the sword, archery, and the tea ceremony.

Haboku-Sansui, Sesshū, 1495, ink on silk: Splashed-ink style landscape by Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506)

Sansuiga

By the end of the 14th century, monochrome landscape paintings (sansuiga) had found patronage by the ruling Ashikaga family and became the preferred genre among Zen painters, gradually evolving from their Chinese roots to a more Japanese style. An important landscape painter during this period was Tenshō Shūbun, a monk at the Kyoto temple of Shōkoku-ji who traveled to Korea and studied under Chinese painters. He returned to Japan in 1404 and settled in Kyoto, then the capital city. He became director of the court painting bureau that had been established by Ashikaga shoguns, who were influential art patrons. Shūbun's best known landscape painting, designated as a National Treasure in Japan, is *Reading in a Bamboo Grove*, now kept in the Tokyo National Museum.

Detail of *Reading in a Bamboo Grove*, 1446, Shūbun: Tenshō Shūbun's (1414–1463) best known landscape painting.

Shigajiku

Another style that developed in the Muromachi period is Shigajiku (詩). This is usually a painting accompanied by poetry and has its roots in China, where painting and poetry were seen as inherently connected. This style grew out of literary circles; an artist would usually be given a subject to paint, and the poets would compose accompanying verses to be written above the work.

A famous example is the scroll *Catching a Catfish with a Gourd* (Hyōnen-zu 瓢), located at Taizō-in, Myōshin-ji, Kyoto. Created by the priest-painter Josetsu (c. 1386–1428), it includes 31 verses of many Zen priests inscribed above the painting. In the foreground of the painting, a man is depicted on the bank of a stream holding a small gourd and looking at a large slithery catfish. Mist fills the middle ground, and the background mountains appear to be far in the distance. The painting was commissioned by the 4th Shogun of the Muromachi Period, Ashikaga Yoshimochi (1386–1428), and was based on the nonsensical riddle: "How do you catch a catfish with a gourd?" The painting and accompanying poems capture both the playfulness and the perplexing nature of Zen buddhist Koans, which were supposed to aid the Zen practitioner in their meditation.

In the late Muromachi period, ink painting had migrated out of the Zen monasteries into the art world in general. Artists from the Kano School and the Ami School adopted the style and themes but introduced a more plastic and decorative effect that would continue into modern times.

Zen Dry Rock Gardens

Zen dry rock gardens were created at temples of Zen Buddhism during the Muromachi Period to imitate the intimate essence of nature.

Learning Objectives

Describe the features of the Zen dry rock gardens of the Muromachi Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Muromachi Period in Japan was characterized by political rivalaries that frequently led to wars, but also by an extraordinary flourishing of Japanese culture. It saw the beginning of Noh theater, the Japanese tea ceremony, the shoin style of Japanese architecture, and the zen garden.
- In Kyoto in the 14th and 15th century, a new kind of garden designed to stimulate meditation began to appear at the important zen temples.
- These new zen dry rock gardens were usually relatively small, surrounded by a wall, and meant to be seen while seated from a single viewpoint outside the garden.
- The invention of the zen garden was closely connected with developments in Japanese ink landscape paintings. Japanese painters such as Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506) and Soami (1472–1525) greatly simplified their views of nature, showing only the most essential aspects of nature.
- The most famous of all zen gardens in Kyoto is Ryōan-ji, built in the late 15th century when, for the first time, the zen garden became purely abstract.

Key Terms

- **Noh theater**: A major form of classical Japanese musical drama that has been performed since the 14th century; many characters are masked, with men playing both male and female roles.
- **shoin**: A type of audience hall in Japanese architecture that was developed during the Muromachi period; the term originally meant a study and a place for lectures on the sūtra within a temple, but later it came to mean just a drawing room or study.

Background: The Muromachi Period

The Muromachi Period in Japan, which took place at roughly the same time as the Renaissance in Europe, was characterized by political rivalries that frequently led to wars. However, it was also characterized by an extraordinary flourishing of Japanese culture. It saw the beginning of Noh theater, the Japanese tea ceremony, the shoin style of Japanese architecture, and the zen garden.

A New Kind of Garden

Zen Buddhism was introduced into Japan at the end of the 12th century. It quickly achieved a wide following, particularly among the Samurai class and war lords, who admired its doctrine of self-discipline. The gardens of the early zen temples in Japan resembled Chinese gardens at the time, with lakes and islands. However, in Kyoto in the 14th and 15th century, a new kind of garden appeared at the important zen temples. These zen gardens were designed to stimulate meditation. “Nature, if you made it expressive by reducing it to its abstract forms, could transmit the most profound thoughts by its simple presence,” Michel Baridon, a well-known researcher, wrote. “The compositions of stone, already common China, became in Japan, veritable petrified landscapes, which seemed suspended in time, as in a certain moment of Noh theater, which dates to the same period.”

Saihō-ji

The first garden to begin the transition to this new style is considered by many experts to be Saihō-ji, The Temple of the Perfumes of the West—popularly known as Koke-dera, the Moss Garden—in the western part of Kyoto. The Buddhist monk and zen master Musō Kokushi transformed a Buddhist temple into a zen monastery in 1334 and built the gardens. The lower garden of Saihō-ji is in the traditional Heian Period style: a pond with several rock compositions representing islands. The upper garden is a dry rock garden featuring three rock “islands.” The first, called Kameshima (the island of the turtle), resembles a turtle swimming in a “lake” of moss. The second, Zazen-seki, is a flat meditation rock that is believed to radiate calm and silence. The third island is the kare-taki, a dry “waterfall” composed of a stairway of flat granite rocks. The moss that now surrounds the rocks and represents

water was not part of the original garden plan; it grew several centuries later when the garden was left untended. However, it is now the most famous feature of the garden.

The moss gardens of Saihō-ji: Golden Pond in the center of the moss garden.

Tenryū-ji

Muso Kokushi built another temple garden at Tenryū-ji, known as the Temple of the Celestial Dragon. This garden appears to have been strongly influenced by Chinese landscape paintings of the Song Dynasty, which feature mountains rising in the mist and suggest great depth and height. The garden at Tenryū-ji has a real pond with water and a dry waterfall of rocks, appearing similar to a Chinese landscape. Saihō-ji and Tenryū-ji show the transition from the Heian style garden toward a more abstract and stylized view of nature.

Ginkaku-ji

The gardens of Ginkaku-ji, also known as the Silver Pavilion, are also attributed to Muso Kokushi. This temple garden includes a traditional pond garden, but it had a new feature for a Japanese garden: an area of raked white gravel with a perfectly shaped mountain of white gravel, resembling Mount Fuji, in the center. The scene is called ginshanada, or “sand of silver and open sea.” This garden feature became known as kogetsudai, or “small mountain facing the moon.” After this garden was built, similar small Mount Fujis made of sand or earth covered with grass appeared in Japanese gardens for centuries afterwards.

Silver Pavilion at Ginkaku-ji, a Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan: At the gardens at Ginkaku-ji, commonly known as the Silver Pavilion, the viewer can see the perfectly shaped mountain of white gravel, resembling Mount Fuji, in the center.

Ryōan-ji

The most famous of all zen gardens in Kyoto is Ryōan-ji, built in the late 15th century where, for the first time, the zen garden became purely abstract. The garden is a rectangle of 340 square meters. Placed within it are 15 stones of different sizes, carefully composed in five groups: one group of five stones, two groups of three, and two groups of two stones. The stones are surrounded by white gravel, which is carefully raked every day by the monks. The only vegetation in the garden is some moss around the stones. The garden is meant to be viewed from a seated position on the veranda of the hōjō, the residence of the abbot of the monastery.

Ryōan-ji (late 15th century) in Kyoto, Japan, a famous example of a zen garden: The most famous of all zen gardens in Kyoto is Ryōan-ji, built in the late 15th century where for the first time the zen garden became purely abstract.

Daisen-in

The garden at Daisen-in (1509–1513) took a more literary approach than Ryōan-ji. A “river” of white gravel represents a metaphorical journey through life—beginning with a dry waterfall in the mountains, passing through rapids and rocks, and ending in a tranquil sea of white gravel with two gravel mountains.

A mountain, waterfall, and gravel “river” at Daisen-in (1509–1513): The garden at Daisen-in took a more literary approach than Ryōan-ji, with its “river” of white gravel representing a metaphorical journey through life.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Buddhist art in Japan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art_in_Japan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- calligraphy. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/calligraphy. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Koan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Koan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shubun - Reading in a Bamboo Grove detail. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shubun_-_Reading_in_a_Bamboo_Grove_detail.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sesshu - Haboku-Sansui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sesshu_-_Haboku-Sansui.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Japanese rock garden. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_rock_garden. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- shoin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/shoin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Noh theater. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Noh%20theater. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shubun - Reading in a Bamboo Grove detail. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shubun_-_Reading_in_a_Bamboo_Grove_detail.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Sesshu - Haboku-Sansui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sesshu_-_Haboku-Sansui.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Daisen-in2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Daisen-in2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1024px-Ginkakuji_Temple_mars_2009_053.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginkaku-ji#/media/File:Ginkakuji_Temple_mars_2009_053.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-Saihouji-kokedera02.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Saih%C5%8D-ji_(Kyoto)#/media/File:Saihouji-kokedera02.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji MG 4512. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji_MG_4512.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 24.1: The Muromachi Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

24.2: The Momoyama Period

Japanese Architecture in the Momoyama Period

The ornate castle architecture and interiors of the Momoyama period were a reflection of both a feudal lord's power and a new aesthetic sense.

Learning Objectives

Explain the relevance of ornate castle architecture and interiors of Momoyama architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During the Momoyama period (1573–1603), Japan underwent a process of unification after a long period of civil war, and rulers Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi built castles as symbols of their power. Typically, castles build during this period consisted of a central tower or tenshu surrounded by gardens and fortified buildings.
- The dark interiors of castles were often decorated by artists, and the spaces were separated using sliding fusuma panels and byōbu folding screens.
- The ornate castle architecture and interiors, adorned with painted screens embellished with gold leaf, marked a clear departure from the somber monotones favored during the previous Muromachi period.
- The shoin style, or a style of Japanese residential architecture that forms the basis of today's traditional-style Japanese houses, had its origins within the earlier Muromachi period and continued to be refined during the Momoyama period.
- Ōsaki Hachiman-gū (大) is a Shinto shrine in Aoba-ku, Sendai, Miyagi, Japan and is a fine example of Momoyama architecture.

Key Terms

- **daimyo**: A lord during the Japanese feudal period.
- **hip-and-gable**: An East Asian style of roof architecture in which a hip roof slopes down on all four sides and integrates a gable on two opposing sides; it is usually constructed with two large sloping roof sections in the front and back respectively, while the two sides each are usually constructed with a smaller roof section.

Overview: Architecture in the Momoyama Period

During the Momoyama period (1573–1603), Japan underwent a process of unification after a long period of civil war. It was marked by the rule of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, men who built castles as symbols of their power: Nobunaga in Azuchi, the seat of his government, and Hideyoshi in Momoyama. The Ōnin War during the previous Muromachi period had led to the rise of castle architecture in Japan. By the time of the Momoyama period, each domain was allowed to have one castle of its own.

The Momoyama period was a period of interest in the outside world, while it also saw the development of large urban centers and the rise of the merchant class. The ornate castle architecture and interiors, adorned with painted screens embellished with gold leaf, were a reflection of both the power of the feudal lord (known as a daimyo) and a new aesthetic sense that marked a clear departure from the somber monotones favored during the previous Muromachi period. A specific genre that emerged at this time was called the Namban style—exotic depictions of European Christian priests, traders, and other "southern barbarians."

Castle Architecture

Typically, castles during this period consisted of a central tower or tenshu surrounded by gardens and fortified buildings. All of this was set within massive stone walls and surrounded by deep moats. The dark interiors of castles were often decorated by artists, and the spaces were separated using sliding fusuma panels and byōbu folding screens.

Byobu: A six-panel byōbu folding screen from the 17th century painted with nature imagery.

Matsumoto, Kumamoto, and Himeji (popularly known as the White Heron castle) are excellent examples of the castles of the period, while Nijo Castle in Kyōto is an example of castle architecture blended with that of an imperial palace, to produce a style that is more in keeping with the Chinese influence of previous centuries.

Matsumoto: Matsumoto Castle in Matsumoto, Nagano, completed in 1600.

Residential Architecture

The shoin style, or a style of Japanese residential architecture that forms the basis of today's traditional-style Japanese houses, had its origins within the earlier Muromachi period and continued to be refined during the Momoyama period. Verandas linked the interiors of residential buildings with highly cultivated exterior gardens. Fusuma (vertical rectangular panels that can slide from side to side) and byōbu (folding screens) became highly decorated with paintings, and often an interior room with shelving and an alcove (tokonoma) was used to display art work (typically a hanging scroll).

Ōsaki Hachiman-gū

Ōsaki Hachiman-gū (大) is a Shinto shrine in Aoba-ku, Sendai, Miyagi, Japan and is a fine example of Momoyama architecture. The main shrine building (社 shaden) is the oldest extant structure in which the worship hall and the main sanctuary are interconnected under the same roof in the shape of an H (a structure known as ishi-no-ma-zukuri). It is a single-storied structure consisting of a main sanctuary (honden) and a worship hall (haiden), which are joined via a connecting passage called ishi-no-ma. All three structures are under a single roof covered with shake shingles. The sanctuary and worship hall are both built with a hip-and-gable roof, to which a simple gabled roof of the ishi-no-ma connects. On the front of the building is an attached triangular dormer with a decorative bargeboard of concave shape; the entrance is covered by an elaborate canopy.

Ōsaki Hachiman-gū shrine in Sendai city: The main shrine building is an example of Momoyama architecture.

Shoin Rooms

A shoin is a type of audience hall in Japanese architecture that was developed during the Muromachi period and refined during the Momoyama period.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the changes in Japanese shoin rooms during the Momoyama Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- *Shoin* originally referred to a study and a place for lectures on the sūtra within a temple, but later it came to mean simply a drawing room or study.
- The emerging architecture of the Muromachi period was subsequently influenced by the increasing use and appearance of shoin. One of the most noticeable changes in architecture to arise from the shoin came from the practice of lining the floors of the room with tatami mats.
- The architecture surrounding and influenced by the shoin quickly developed many distinguishing features, such as the tokonoma (an elevated recess built into the wall to display art) and chigaidana (shelving structures built into the tokonoma to display smaller objects).
- Occurring at the same time as the development of shoin architecture was the rise in popularity of fusuma, or sliding doors used to divide rooms.

Key Terms

- **tatami**: Straw matting, in a standard size, used as a floor covering in Japanese houses.
- **sūtra**: An aphorism (or line, rule, formula) or a collection of such aphorisms in the form of a manual or, more broadly, a text in Hinduism or Buddhism.
- **tokonoma**: A recess in a domestic interior in which a hanging scroll, flower arrangement, or other art is displayed.
- **fusuma**: A vertical rectangular sliding panel, often painted or decorated, used in Japan as a door or movable wall.

Overview

A shoin (書, drawing room or study) is a type of audience hall in Japanese architecture that was developed during the Muromachi period. The term originally referred to a study and a place for lectures within a temple, but later it came to mean simply a drawing

room or study. The shoin-zukuri style takes its name from these rooms. In a shoin-zukuri building, the shoin is the room dedicated to the reception of guests.

The Shiro-shoin at Hongan-ji: Shoin is a type of audience hall in Japanese architecture.

Development of the Shoin

The foundations for the design of today's traditional Japanese residential houses were established in the late Muromachi period and refined during the ensuing Momoyama period. Shoin-zukuri, a new architectural style influenced by Zen Buddhism, developed during that time from the earlier Heian period's palaces and the subsequent residential style favored by the warrior class during the Kamakura period.

One of the most noticeable changes in architecture to arise from the shoin came from the practice of lining floors with tatami mats. Since tatami mats have a standardized size, the floor plans for shoin rooms had to be developed around the proportions of the tatami mat; this in turn affected the proportions of doors, the height of rooms, and other aspects of the structure. Before the shoin popularized the practice of lining floors with tatami mats, it had been standard to only bring out a single tatami mat for the highest-ranking person in the room to sit on.

The architecture surrounding and influenced by the shoin quickly developed many other distinguishing features. Because guests sat on the floor rather than on furniture, they were positioned at a lower vantage point than their Chinese counterparts at that time, who were accustomed to using furniture. This lower vantage point generated such developments as suspended ceilings, which functioned to make the room feel less expansive and also resulted in the ceilings rafters no longer being visible, as they were in China. The new suspended ceilings also allowed for more elaborate and ornate decoration.

Other characteristics to arise from the lower vantage point were the tokonoma and chigaidana. The tokonoma was an elevated recess built into the wall to create a space for displaying Chinese art, which was popular at the time, at a comfortable eye level. The chigaidana, or "staggered shelves," were shelving structures built into the tokonoma to display smaller objects. Fusuma, or sliding doors, were also becoming a popular means to divide rooms. As a result, columns began to be created that were square-shaped to accommodate the sliding doors.

The asymmetry of the tokonoma and chigaidana pair, as well as the squared pillars, differentiated the shoin design from the contemporary Chinese design of the time, which preferred symmetric pairs of furniture and round pillars. Soon after its advent, shoin architecture became associated with these evolving elements as it developed into the predominant format for formal gathering rooms.

The Tea Ceremony

The art of the tea ceremony flourished during the Momoyama period and was influenced by Zen principles of imperfection and transience.

Learning Objectives

Describe the cultural relevance of the Japanese Tea Ceremony

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Momoyama period saw the budding of what is generally regarded as Japanese traditional culture as we know it today.
- The Japanese tea ceremony developed as a transformative practice centered around the aesthetic of *wabi-sabi*, a concept derived from Zen Buddhism that emphasizes simplicity, humility, impermanence, and intense appreciation of the immediate experience.
- Murata Jukō is known as the founder of the tea ceremony as a spiritual practice. He was the first to emphasize the concept of wabi-sabi in the aesthetic of the ceremony.
- Sen Rikyū (1522–1591) is the most famous and revered tea master in the history of the tea ceremony. His teachings perfected many newly developed forms in architecture and gardens, art, and the full development of the Way of Tea.
- Sen Rikyū emphasized several key aspects of the ceremony, including rustic simplicity, directness of approach, and honesty of self; he was also responsible for the creation of hand-moulded Raku teabowls.

Key Terms

- **chanoyu**: A traditional Japanese tea ceremony in which matcha is prepared and presented.
- **wabi-sabi**: A Japanese aesthetic that derives from imperfection and transience.

Introduction

The Japanese tea ceremony or *chanoyu*, also known as the Way of Tea, is a Japanese cultural ritual involving the cemeronial preparation and presentation of *matcha* or powdered green tea. Loose leaf green tea or *sencha* is also used, but far less commonly. Zen Buddhism was a formative influence in the development of the tea ceremony.

History of the Tea Ceremony

The art of the tea ceremony flourished during the Momoyama period (ca. 1568–1603). Both Oda Nobunaga—the initiator of the unification of Japan under the shogunate in the late 16th century—and his successor Toyotomi Hideyoshi lavished time and money on this pastime, collecting tea bowls and other implements, sponsoring lavish social events, and patronizing acclaimed masters of the tea ceremony.

By the 16th century, tea drinking had spread to all levels of society in Japan. Sen Rikyū (1522–1591) is perhaps the most well-known and still revered figure in the history of the tea ceremony. He was driven by the concept of ichi-go ichi-e, a philosophy that each meeting should be treasured, for it can never be reproduced. His teachings perfected many newly developed forms in architecture, gardens, art, and the full development of the Way of Tea. He also reestablished and emphasized several key aspects of the ceremony, including rustic simplicity, directness of approach, and honesty of self. The principles he set forward—harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility—are still central to the tea ceremony today.

The tea ceremony flourished during the Momoyama period: An open tea house serving matcha (right) and a peddler selling decoctants (left). The monk clothing depicts the relationship between matcha culture, tea ceremony, and Buddhism.

Cultural Relevance of the Tea Ceremony

The Japanese tea ceremony developed as a transformative practice and began to evolve its own aesthetic over the years. Murata Jukō is known as an early developer of the ceremony as a spiritual practice; he studied Zen Buddhism under the monk Ikkyū, who revitalized Zen in the 15th century, and this is considered to have influenced his use of the Zen concept of *wabi-sabi* in the aesthetic of the tea ceremony.

"Wabi" represents the inner spiritual experiences of human life. Its original meaning indicates quiet or sober refinement, or subdued taste characterized by humility, restraint, simplicity, naturalism, profundity, imperfection, and asymmetry. "Sabi," on the other hand, represents the outer material side of life. Originally, it meant "worn," "weathered," or "decayed." Together, *wabi-sabi* emphasizes simplicity, humility, consciousness of impermanence, and intense appreciation of the immediate experience, and this was reflected in the aesthetics of the tea ceremony.

Tea Ceremony Objects

Tea equipment is called chadōgu. A wide range of chadōgu are available and different styles and motifs are used for different events and in different seasons. All of the tools for the tea ceremony are handled with exquisite care. They are scrupulously cleaned before and after each use and before storing, and some are handled only with gloved hands. Some items, such as the tea storage jar "chigusa," were so revered that they were given proper names like people.

The pottery used for the tea ceremony is often simple and natural, in accordance with wabi-sabi, and came to transform the manner in which the Japanese viewed ceramic ware. Tea master Sen Rikyū was involved in the innovation of Raku teabowls with the collaboration of a tile maker named Raku Chōjirō, prompted by his preference for simple, rustic items made in Japan rather than the expensive Chinese ware that was in fashion at the time. These hand-moulded and glazed vessels have become intimately connected with the tea ceremony and are still in use to the present day.

The following are a few of the essential components:

- The chakin, a small rectangular white linen or hemp cloth mainly used to wipe the tea bowl.
- The tea bowl, available in a wide range of sizes and styles, with different styles used for thick and thin tea. Shallow bowls, which allow the tea to cool rapidly, are used in summer, while deep bowls are used in winter. Bowls over four hundred years old are in use today. The best bowls are thrown by hand, and irregularities and imperfections are prized and often featured prominently as the "front" of the bowl.
- The tea caddy, a small lidded container in which the powdered tea is placed for use in the tea-making procedure.
- The tea scoop, generally carved from a single piece of bamboo, ivory, or wood and used to scoop tea from the tea caddy into the tea bowl. Different styles and colors are used in various tea traditions.
- The tea whisk, used to mix the powdered tea with the hot water and typically carved from a single piece of bamboo.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Osaki Hachiman-gu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Osaki_Hachiman-gu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Azuchi-Momoyama period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Azuchi-Momoyama_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art%23Azuchi-Momoyama_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Namban style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Namban%20style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- daimyo. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/daimyo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#Azuchi-Momoyama_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byobu.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#/media/File:Byobu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Matsumoto_Castle05s5s4592.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#/media/File:Matsumoto_Castle05s5s4592.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Osakimachimangu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Osakimachimangu.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shoin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sutra. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/sutra. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tokonoma. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tokonoma. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tatami. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tatami. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fusuma. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fusuma. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byobu.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#/media/File:Byobu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Matsumoto_Castle05s5s4592.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#/media/File:Matsumoto_Castle05s5s4592.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Osakimachimangu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Osakimachimangu.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shiroshoin Nishi Honganji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shiroshoin_Nishi_Honganji.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese tea ceremony. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_tea_ceremony. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Azuchi-Momoyama period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Azuchi-Momoyama_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- wabi-sabi. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/wabi-sabi. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- chanoyu. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chanoyu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Byobu.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#/media/File:Byobu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Matsumoto_Castle05s5s4592.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_architecture#/media/File:Matsumoto_Castle05s5s4592.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Osakimachimangu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Osakimachimangu.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shiroshoin Nishi Honganji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shiroshoin_Nishi_Honganji.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kanu014d Osanobu 71 utaiawase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kan%C5%8D_Osanobu_71_utaiawase.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 24.2: The Momoyama Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

24.3: The Edo Period

Rinpa School Painting in the Edo Period

In the early years of the Edo period, some of Japan's finest expressions in painting were produced by the Rinpa School.

Learning Objectives

Identify key attributes of Rinpa painting during the Edo period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In the early years of the Edo period, the full impact of Tokugawa policies had not yet been felt, and some of Japan's finest expressions in architecture and painting were produced by the Rinpa School.
- Rinpa artists worked in various formats, notably screens, fans, hanging scrolls, woodblock printed books, lacquerware, ceramics, and kimono textiles. Many Rinpa paintings were used on the sliding doors and walls (fusuma) of noble homes.
- In 1615, Hon'ami Kōetsu founded the Rinpa School of painting by establishing an artistic community of craftsmen supported by wealthy merchant patrons in northeastern Kyoto.
- Kōetsu's collaborator, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, maintained an atelier in Kyoto and produced commercial paintings such as decorative fans and folding screens; Sōtatsu specialized in decorated paper, to which Kōetsu added calligraphy.
- Like Kōetsu, Sōtatsu pursued the classical Yamato-e genre, but he also pioneered a new technique with bold outlines and striking color schemes.
- The Rinpa School was revived in the Genroku era (1688–1704) by Ogata Kōrin and Ogata Kenzan; Kōrin's innovation was to depict nature as an abstract using numerous color and hue gradations and mixing colors on the surface to achieve eccentric effects.

Key Terms

- **lacquerware**: A decorative object coated with lacquer.
- **swordsmith**: A maker of swords.

Background: The Edo Period

In the Edo (江) or Tokugawa (徳) period between 1603 to 1868, Japan was under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, a form of military rule headed by the shogun. The period was characterized by economic growth, strict social order, isolationist foreign policies, increased environmental protection, and popular enjoyment of the arts. It was officially established in Edo on March 24, 1603 by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). The period came to an end with the Meiji Restoration on May 3, 1868, after the fall of Edo to forces loyal to the Emperor.

One of the dominant themes in the Edo period was the repressive policies of the shogunate and the attempts of artists to escape these strictures. The foremost of these strictures was the closing of the country to foreigners and the imposition of strict codes of behavior affecting many aspects of life, including the clothes one wore, the person one married, and the activities one could or should not pursue. In the early years of the Edo period, however, the full impact of Tokugawa policies had not yet been felt, and some of Japan's finest expressions in architecture and painting were produced by the Rinpa School.

The Rinpa School

Style and Technique

Rinpa artists worked in various formats, notably screens, fans, hanging scrolls, woodblock printed books, lacquerware, ceramics, and kimono textiles. Many Rinpa paintings were used on the sliding doors and walls (fusuma) of noble homes. Subject matter and style were often borrowed from Heian period traditions of Yamato-e, with elements from Muromachi ink paintings, Chinese Ming Dynasty flower-and-bird paintings, and Momoyama period Kanō School developments. The stereotypical standard painting in the

Rinpa style involves simple natural subjects such as birds, plants, and flowers with the background filled in with gold leaf. Emphasis on refined design and technique became more pronounced as the Rinpa style developed.

Development of the School

Rinpa is one of the major historical schools of Japanese painting. In 1615, Hon'ami Kōetsu founded an artistic community of craftsmen, supported by wealthy merchant patrons of the Nichiren Buddhist sect at Takagamine in northeastern Kyoto. Merchants, who were the lowest of the four social classes and often considered unproductive members of society, were increasingly relied on by the samurai for the production of consumer goods and artistic works. Both the affluent merchant town elite and the old Kyoto aristocratic families favored arts that followed classical traditions, and Kōetsu obliged by producing numerous works of ceramics, calligraphy, and lacquerware. Kōetsu's collaborator, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, maintained an atelier in Kyoto and produced commercial paintings such as decorative fans and folding screens. Sōtatsu specialized in making decorated paper with gold or silver backgrounds, which Kōetsu assisted by adding calligraphy.

The Founders: Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu

Both artists came from families of cultural significance. Kōetsu came from a family of swordsmiths who had served the imperial court and great warlords and shoguns. Kōetsu's father evaluated swords for the Maeda clan, as did Kōetsu himself. However, Kōetsu was less concerned with swords and more interested in painting, calligraphy, lacquerwork, and the Japanese tea ceremony (he later created several Raku ware tea bowls). His own painting style was flamboyant, recalling the aristocratic style of the Heian period.

Sōtatsu also pursued the same classical Yamato-e genre as Kōetsu, but he pioneered a new technique with bold outlines and striking color schemes. Two of his most famous works include the folding screens *Wind and Thunder Gods* (風 Fūjin Raijin-zu), located in Kennin-ji temple in Kyoto, and *Matsushima* (松) at the Freer Gallery in Washington, DC.

Early Rinpa School work: Portion of Sōtatsu's *Fūjin Raijin-zu* (*Wind and Thunder Gods)*. 17th century.

Ogata Kōrin and Ogata Kenzan

The Rinpa school was revived in the Genroku era (元 1688–1704) by Ogata Kōrin and his younger brother Ogata Kenzan, sons of a prosperous Kyoto textile merchant. Kōrin's innovation was to depict nature as an abstract, using numerous color and hue gradations, mixing colors on the surface to achieve eccentric effects, and liberally using precious substances like gold and pearl.

Kōrin's masterpiece *Red and White Plum Trees* (紅 Kōhakubai-zu, c. 1714–15) is now at the MOA Museum of Art in Atami, Shizuoka. As a dramatic composition, it established the direction of Rinpa for the remainder of its history. Kōrin collaborated with Kenzan in painting designs and calligraphy on his brother's pottery. Kenzan remained a potter in Kyoto until after Kōrin's death in

1716, when he began to paint professionally. Other Rinpa artists active in this period were Tatebayashi Kagei, Tawaraya Sōri, Watanabe Shikō, Fukae Roshū, and Nakamura Hōchū.

Portion of Ogata Kōrin's Kōhakubai-zu: Kōrin's *Red and White Plum Trees* (1714–15) established the direction of Rinpa for the remainder of its history.

Sakai Hōitsu

Rinpa was revived again in 19th century Edo by Sakai Hōitsu (1761–1828), a Kanō School artist whose family had been one of Ogata Kōrin's sponsors. Sakai published a series of 100 woodcut prints based on paintings by Kōrin, and his painting *Summer and Autumn Grasses* (夏 Natsu akikusa-zu) is painted on the back of Kōrin's *Wind and Thunder Gods* screen and is now at the Tokyo National Museum.

Kanō School Painting in the Edo Period

The Kanō School, which had a naturalistic style, was the dominant style of the Edo period (1603 – 1868).

Learning Objectives

Describe the defining characteristics of the Kano School during the Edo Period, and distinguish it from literati painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Kanō School began by reflecting a renewed influence from Chinese painting, and it continued to produce monochrome brush paintings in the Chinese style over the years.
- However, the school simultaneously developed a brightly colored and firmly outlined style for large panels, which reflected distinctively Japanese traditions.
- The school was supported by the shogunate, effectively representing an official style of art; under the Edo period in which art and culture were strictly regulated, this essentially monopolized the field of painting.
- Kanō School artists worked mainly for the nobility, shoguns, and emperors, covering a wide range of styles, subjects, and formats.
- While initially innovative, from the 17th century onward, the artists of the school became increasingly conservative and academic in their approach.

Key Terms

- **Kanō school**: One of the most famous schools of Japanese painting, and the dominant style of painting from the late 15th century until 1868, when the Meiji period began.
- **literati**: Well-educated, literary people; intellectuals who are interested in literature.

Overview: The Kanō School

The Kanō School (狩) was the dominant style of painting during the Edo period. The Kanō family itself produced a series of major artists over several generations, and a large number of unrelated artists trained in workshops of the school. Some artists married into the family and changed their names, while others were adopted, creating a family known for its artistic innovations.

The Style of the School

The school began by reflecting a renewed influence from Chinese painting, and it continued to produce monochrome brush paintings in the Chinese style over the years. However, it simultaneously developed a brightly colored and firmly outlined style for large panels, which reflected distinctively Japanese traditions. Kanō Motonobu, a Japanese painter and member of the Kano School, is particularly known for expanding the school's repertoire through his bold artistic techniques and patronage. Many of the works during this period combined the forceful quality of work from the earlier Momoyama period with the tranquil depiction of nature and more refined use of color typical of the current Edo period.

The school was supported by the shogunate, effectively representing an official style of art; under the Edo period in which art and culture were strictly regulated, this essentially monopolized the field of painting. The Kanō School drew on the Chinese tradition of literati painting by scholar-bureaucrats, but the Kanō painters were firmly professional artists: they were very generously paid if successful and received formal workshop training in the family workshop (similar to European painters of the Renaissance or Baroque period). Kanō painters worked primarily for the nobility, shoguns, and emperors, covering a wide range of styles, subjects, and formats. While initially innovative, from the 17th century onward, the artists of the school became increasingly conservative and academic in their approach.

Kanō Tan'yu, Spring Landscape (1672): Tan'yū headed the Kajibashi branch of the Kanō School in Edo and painted in many castles, including the Imperial palace. He used a less bold but extremely elegant style, which tended to become stiff and academic in the hands of less talented imitators.

The range of forms, styles, and subjects that were established in the early 17th century continued to be developed and refined without major innovation for the next two centuries. Although the Kanō School was the most successful in Japan, the distinctions between its work and the work of other schools tended to diminish over time, as all schools worked in a range of styles and formats, making the attribution of unsigned works often unclear. By the end of the Edo period and the beginning of the Meiji period (1868), the Kanō School had divided into many different branches.

Japanese Literati Painting in the Edo Period

An important art trend during the Edo period was the bunjinga or Nanga School, a kind of literati painting highly influenced by China literati.

Learning Objectives

Discuss literati painting in Edo Japan and its debt to China

Key Takeaways

Key Points

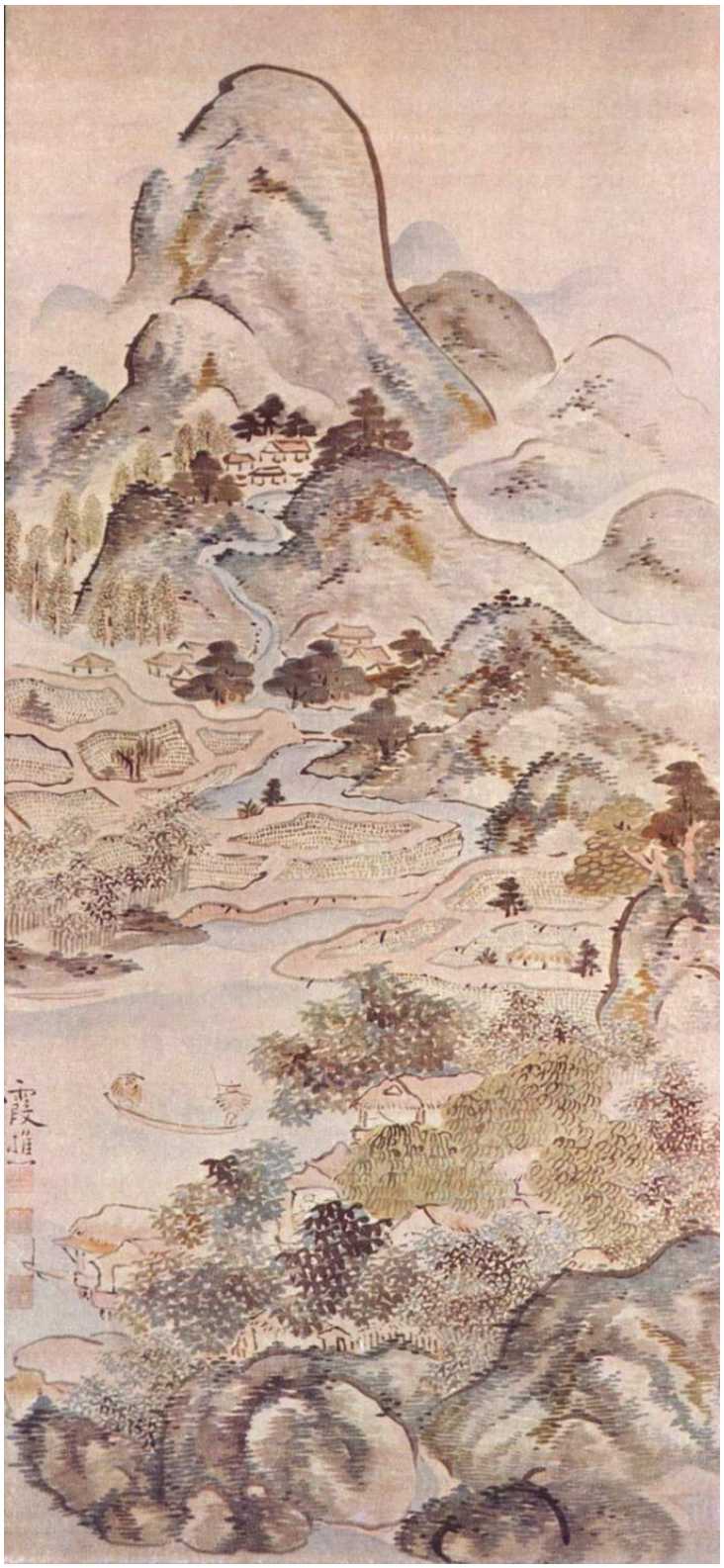
- Japanese bunjinga paintings—usually in monochrome black ink, sometimes with light color, and nearly always depicting Chinese landscapes or similar subjects—were patterned after Chinese literati painting.
- Due to the Edo period policy of sakoku, Japanese literati artists were left with an incomplete view of Chinese literati ideas, and the bunjinga style emerged from a fusion of Chinese and Japanese ideals.
- Japanese literati were not members of an academic, intellectual bureaucracy like their Chinese counterparts; while the Chinese literati were academics aspiring to be painters, the Japanese literati were professionally trained painters aspiring to be academics and intellectuals.
- Bunjinga paintings almost always depicted traditional Chinese subjects, and artists focused almost exclusively on landscapes, birds, and flowers.
- As Japan became exposed to Western culture at the end of the Edo period, many bunjinga artists began to incorporate stylistic elements of Western art into their own.

Key Terms

- **sakoku**: The foreign relations policy of Japan in which strict regulations were applied to commerce and foreign relations by the shogunate; the policy stated that, with the exception of certain circumstances, no foreigner could enter nor could any Japanese citizen leave the country on penalty of death; the policy was enacted by the Tokugawa shogunate from 1633–39 and remained in effect until 1853, with the arrival of the Black Ships of Commodore Matthew Perry and the forcible opening of Japan to Western trade.
- **Bunjinga**: A school of Japanese painting that flourished in the late Edo period among artists who considered themselves literati, or intellectuals; also known as Nanga.

Rise of Bunjinga

An important trend in the Edo period was the rise of the bunjinga genre, a kind of literati painting, also known as the Nanga School or Southern Painting school. This genre started as an imitation of Chinese scholar-amateur painters of the Yuan Dynasty, whose works and techniques came to Japan in the mid-18th century. Later bunjinga artists considerably modified both the techniques and the subject matter of this genre to create a blending of Japanese and Chinese styles. Exemplars of this style include Ike no Taiga, Uragami Gyokudo, Yosa Buson, Tanomura Chikuden, Tani Buncho, and Yamamoto Baiitsu.



Fishing in Springtime by Ike no Taiga (1747): Bunjinga paintings most often depicted traditional Chinese subjects. Artists focused almost exclusively on landscapes, birds, and flowers.

As part of the Nanga School, the bunjinga style of Japanese painting flourished in the late Edo period among artists who considered themselves literati, or intellectuals. While each of these artists was unique and independent, they all shared an admiration for traditional Chinese culture. Their paintings—usually in monochrome black ink, sometimes with light color, and nearly always depicting Chinese landscapes or similar subjects—were patterned after Chinese literati paintings, called wenrenhua. Poetry or other

inscriptions were also an important element of these paintings and were often added by friends of the artist, rather than the artist themselves.

China's Influence

Chinese literati painting focused on expressing the rhythm of nature rather than the realistic depiction of it. However, the artist was encouraged to display a cold lack of affection for the painting, as if he, as an intellectual, was above caring deeply about his work. Ultimately, this style of painting was an outgrowth of the idea of the intellectual, or literati, as a master of all the core traditional arts—painting, calligraphy, and poetry.

Under the Edo period policy of sakoku, Japan was cut off from the outside world almost completely. Its contact with China persisted, although this was greatly limited. What little did make its way into Japan was either imported through Nagasaki or produced by the Chinese people living there. As a result, the bunjinga artists who aspired to the ideals and lifestyles of the Chinese literati were left with a rather incomplete view of Chinese literati ideas and art. Bunjinga grew, therefore, out of what did come to Japan from China, including Chinese woodblock-printed painting manuals and an assortment of paintings widely ranging in quality.

Yearning for a Pleasurable Place in Mountains of the Heart by Kameda Bôsai, 1816: Kameda Bôsai (1752–1826) was a well-known Japanese literati painter.

Bunjinga was also shaped by the great differences in culture and environment of the Japanese literati as compared to their Chinese counterparts. The form was, to a great extent, defined by its rejection of other major schools of art like the Kano and Tosa Schools. In addition, the literati themselves were not members of an academic, intellectual bureaucracy, as their Chinese counterparts were.

While the Chinese literati were academics aspiring to be painters, the Japanese literati were professionally trained painters aspiring to be academics and intellectuals.

Unlike other schools of art that pass on their specific style to their students, every bunjinga artist displayed unique elements in their creations, and many diverged greatly from the stylistic elements employed by their forebears. As Japan became exposed to Western culture at the end of the Edo period, some bunjinga artists began to incorporate stylistic elements of Western art into their own.

8 Daoist Immortals by Tani Bunchō: Tani Bunchō (1763–1841) was a Japanese literati painter and poet.

Ukiyo-e Woodblock Prints in the Edo Period

With the rise of popular culture in the Edo period, a style of woodblock prints called ukiyo-e became a major art form.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ukiyo-e woodblock prints of Edo Japan, and the social milieu they most famously depicted

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- With the rise of popular culture in the Edo period, a style of woodblock prints called ukiyo-e became a major art form.
- Its techniques were fine tuned to produce colorful prints of everything from daily news to schoolbooks. Subject matter ranged from Kabuki actors and the demimonde to courtesans and famous landscapes.
- Ukiyo-e prints began to be produced in the late 17th century, with Harunobu producing the first polychrome print in 1764.
- The dominant artistic figure of the 19th century was Hokusai's contemporary, Hiroshige, a creator of romantic and somewhat sentimental landscape prints.

Key Terms

- **Hiroshige**: (1797–1858) A Japanese ukiyo-e artist and one of the last great artists in that tradition.
- **ukiyo-e**: A Japanese woodblock print or painting depicting everyday life.
- **Katsushika Hokusai**: (1760–1849) A Japanese artist famous for his woodblock print series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji, which includes perhaps the most famous Japanese woodblock print, The Great Wave off Kanagawa.

Overview

With the rise of popular culture in the Edo period, a style of woodblock prints called ukiyo-e became a major art form. Its techniques were fine tuned to produce colorful prints of everything from daily news to schoolbooks. Subject matter ranged from Kabuki actors and courtesans to famous landscapes. By 1800, ukiyo-e flourished alongside Rinpa and literati painting.

The school of art best known in the West is that of the ukiyo-e paintings and woodblock prints of the demimonde—the world of the Kabuki theater and the brothel district. Ukiyo-e prints began to be produced in the late 17th century, and required a highly involved process that included a designer, engraver, printer, and publisher. Suzuki Harunobu produced the first polychrome (multicolor) print in 1764, and print designers of the next generation, including Torii Kiyonaga and Utamaro, created elegant and sometimes insightful depictions of courtesans.

Notable Artists

The best known work of ukiyo-e from the Edo period is the woodblock print series. *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* (富 Fugaku Sanjūroku-kei, c. 1831), which includes the internationally recognized print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, was created during the 1820s by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). Hokusai was influenced by such painters as Sesshu and other styles of Chinese painting. While Hokusai's work prior to this series is certainly important, it was not until this series that he gained broad recognition. It was also *The Great Wave* print that initially received, and continues to receive, acclaim and popularity in the Western world.

The Great Wave off Kanagawa, Hokusai's most famous print, the first in the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*: Although it is often used in tsunami literature, there is no reason to suspect that Hokusai intended it to be interpreted in that way. The waves in this work are sometimes mistakenly referred to as tsunami (津), but they are more accurately called okinami (沖), great off-shore waves.

The dominant artistic figure of the 19th century was Hokusai's contemporary, Hiroshige, a creator of romantic and somewhat sentimental landscape prints. The odd angles and shapes through which Hiroshige often viewed landscapes, with his emphasis on flat planes and strong linear outlines, had a profound impact on such Western artists as Edgar Degas and Vincent van Gogh. Through artworks held in Western museums, these same printmakers would later exert a powerful influence on the imagery and aesthetic approaches used by early Modernist poets like Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington.

Hiroshige's *Upright Tōkaidō* depicts Hakone.: This print shows travelers and porters crossing a steep pass in the mountains at the Hakone station on the Tōkaidō Road.

Ukiyo-e was closely linked to the bunjinga, or literati, style of painting that emerged during the same period. Just as ukiyo-e artists chose to depict figures from life outside of the strictures of the Tokugawa shogunate, bunjinga artists turned to Chinese culture and based their paintings on those of Chinese scholar-painters. The exemplars of this style include Ike no Taiga, Yosa Buson, Tanomura Chikuden, and Yamamoto Baiitsu.

Zenga Painting in the Edo Period

Zenga is the Japanese term for the practice and art of Zen Buddhist painting and calligraphy, which developed during the Edo period.

Learning Objectives

Describe Zenga and its relation to Zen Buddhism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

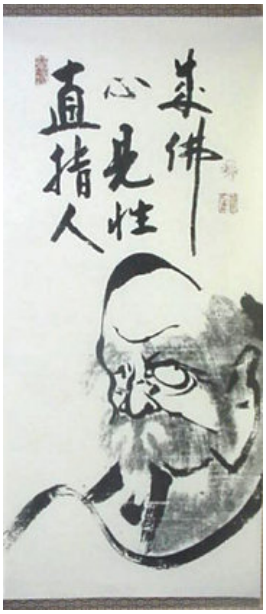
- Zenga is a style of Japanese ink-based calligraphy and painting.
- In many instances of Zenga, calligraphy and images are combined in the same piece; the calligraphy denotes a poem, or saying, that teaches some element of the path of Zen.
- The brush painting in Zenga is characteristically simple, bold, and abstract.
- In keeping with individual paths to enlightenment, nearly any subject matter can lend itself to Zenga; however the enso, sticks, and Mt. Fuji are the most common elements.

Key Terms

- **Ensō**: A Japanese word meaning “circle” and a concept strongly associated with Zen.
- **Zenga**: The Japanese term for the practice and art of Zen Buddhist painting and calligraphy.

Overview: Zenga Painting

Zenga is the Japanese term for the practice and art of Zen Buddhist painting and calligraphy; it is associated with the Japanese tea ceremony and also various martial arts. As a noun, Zenga is a style of Japanese calligraphy and painting done in ink. In many instances, both calligraphy and image will be merged within the same piece. The calligraphy denotes a poem or saying that teaches some element of the path of Zen; the brush painting is characteristically simple, bold, and abstract.



Example of Zen painting, Edo period: This Japanese scroll calligraphy of Bodhidharma reads: “Zen points directly to the human heart, see into your nature and become Buddha.” A man’s face is drawn under the calligraphy. It was created by Hakuin Ekaku (1685 to 1768).

Development of Zenga

Though Zen Buddhism had arrived in Japan at the end of the 12thcentury, Zenga art didn’t come into its own until the beginning of the Edo period in 1600. In keeping with individual paths to enlightenment, nearly any subject matter can and has lent itself to Zenga; however, the most common elements depicted were the ensō, sticks, and Mt. Fuji. In Zen Buddhism, an ensō is a circle that is hand-drawn in one or two uninhibited brushstrokes to express a moment when the mind is free to let the body create. The ensō symbolizes absolute enlightenment, strength, elegance, the universe, and mu (the void), and it is characterized by a minimalism born of Japanese aesthetics.

Ensō: Though nearly any subject matter can and has lent itself to Zenga paintings, one of the most common elements depicted was the ensō, a symbol of enlightenment.

Japanese aesthetics used in Zenga paintings were shaped by a set of ancient ideals that include *wabi* (transient and stark beauty), *sabi* (the beauty of natural patina and aging), and *yūgen* (profound grace and subtlety). These ideals, along with others, underpin much of Japanese cultural and aesthetic norms on what is considered tasteful or beautiful. Japanese aesthetics now encompass a variety of ideals; some of these are traditional, while others are modern and sometimes influenced by other cultures.

Crafts in the Edo Period

Traditional Japanese handicrafts associated with the Edo period include temari (a toy handball for children), doll-making, lacquerware, and weaving.

Learning Objectives

Name the traditional Japanese handicrafts developed during the Edo period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The craft of making temari or handballs evolved into an art in the early Edo period. These balls were made from strips of old kimono silk and exquisitely embroidered with complex decorative stitching.
- Another craft that developed during the Edo period, when Japan was closed to most international trade, was elaborate doll-making; a market of wealthy individuals would pay for the most beautiful doll sets for their homes or as gifts.
- Japanese lacquerwork reached its peak in the 17th century, when lacquer was used to decorate a range of everyday items; the famous lacquerer Ogata Korin introduced a greater use of pewter and mother of pearl in lacquerware.
- Other important crafts during the Edo period include nishijin weaving, yuzen dying, and the production of wadokei or Japanese clocks.

Key Terms

- **Hinamatsuri**: A traditional Japanese doll festival held every year on March 3rd.
- **Edo**: Former name of Tokyo.
- **temari**: A folk craft born in ancient Japan from the desire to amuse and entertain children with a toy handball.
- **gofun**: A smooth, porcelain-like substance made from ground oyster shell.
- **lacquer**: A glossy, resinous material used as a surface coating.

Temari

Of the many and varied traditional handicrafts of Japan, the one closely associated with the Edo period (1600–1868) is the ancient craft of temari. Temari means “handball” in Japanese, and it is a folk craft born in ancient Japan from the desire to amuse and

entertain children with a toy handball. Temari is said to have its origins from Kemari (football), brought to Japan from China about 1400 years ago. These balls were constructed from the remnants of old kimonos; pieces of silk fabric were wadded up to form a rough ball, and this preliminary ball was then further wrapped in additional strips of fabric. Temari-making gradually became an art, and the initially purely functional stitching assumed a decorative and detailed quality over the years, displaying intricate embroidery.

Temari-making grew as a pastime for noble women in the early part of the Edo period, with women of the aristocracy and upper class competing in creating increasingly more intricate and beautiful balls. Over the years and region by region, the women of Japan explored the craft and improved it. Noisemakers were added to the inside of the balls, Japanese designs mimicked the colors of nature, and the brilliant colors of kimono silk were used to stitch eye-catching patterns.

Temari: Temari balls are a folk art form that originated in China and was introduced to Japan around the 7th century A.D.

Doll-Making

Another craft that developed during the Edo period, while Japan was closed to most international trade, was doll-making. During this time, there was a market of wealthy individuals who would pay for the most beautiful doll sets for display in their homes or as valuable gifts. Sets of dolls came to include larger and more elaborate figures. The competitive trade was eventually regulated by the government, meaning that doll-makers could be arrested or banished for breaking laws restricting materials and heights.

Hina dolls are the dolls for Hinamatsuri, the doll festival held annually on March 3rd. They can be made of many materials, but the classic hina doll has a pyramidal body of elaborate, many-layered textiles stuffed with straw and/or wood blocks; carved wood hands (and in some cases feet) covered with gofun; a head of carved wood or molded wood compo covered with gofun, with set-in glass eyes (though before about 1850, the eyes were carved into the gofun and painted); and human or silk hair. A full set comprises at least 15 dolls representing specific characters, with many accessories (dogu); however, a basic set consists of a male-female pair, often referred to as the Emperor and Empress.

Hinamatsuri Hina Dolls, the Emperor with Two Handmaidens: Fine dollmaking developed during the Edo period (1603-1867).

Lacquerwork

Japanese lacquerwork reached its peak in the 17th century during the Edo period. Lacquer was used both for solely decorative objects as well as everyday items, such as combs, tables, bottles, headrests, small boxes, and writing cases. The most famous lacquerer-painter of the time was Ogata Korin, who was the first artist to use mother of pearl and pewter in larger quantities in lacquerware.

Lacquered Writing Box by Ogata Korin, ca. 1700.: This writing box made of black lacquered wood with gold, maki-e, abalone shells, silver, and corroded lead strip decorations dates from the 18th century and reflects the skill of the Edo painter and lacquerer Ogata Korin.

Other Crafts

Several techniques of Japanese weaving and dying also thrived during the Edo period. Nishijin weaving involved weaving many different types of colored yarn together to form decorative designs. In yuzen, or the paste-resist method of dying, designs were applied to textiles using stencils and rice paste, resulting in the imitation of aristocratic brocades, which were forbidden to commoners by laws of the Edo period.

Another Edo period craft that reflected contemporary Japan's interest in electrical phenomena and mechanical sciences was the development of wadokei, or Japanese clockwatches. These were typically made of brass or iron in the lantern clock design and driven by weights.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Japanese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art%23Art_of_the_Edo_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rimpa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rimpa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edo period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_period%23Popular_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edo period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lacquerware. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lacquerware. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- swordsmith. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/swordsmith. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fujin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White Prunus Korin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Prunus_Korin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kano school. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kano_school. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kanu014d Motonobu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kan%C5%8D_Motonobu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kano school. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kano%20school. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- literati. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/literati. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fujin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White Prunus Korin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Prunus_Korin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shunkeizu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shunkeizu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Japanese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_painting%23Edo_period_.281603-1868.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bunjinga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunjinga. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sakoku. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/sakoku. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bunjinga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunjinga. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fujin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White Prunus Korin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Prunus_Korin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shunkeizu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shunkeizu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai%2C_1816.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kameda_B%C5%8Dsai#/media/File:%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai,_1816.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tani_Bunch%C5%8D#/media/File:8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ikeno Taiga 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ikeno_Taiga_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- The Great Wave off Kanagawa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art%23Art_of_the_Edo_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hokusai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hokusai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Katsushika Hokusai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsushika%20Hokusai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ukiyo-e. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ukiyo-e. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hiroshige. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshige. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fujin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White Prunus Korin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Prunus_Korin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shunkeizu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shunkeizu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai%2C_1816.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kameda_B%C5%8Dsai#/media/File:%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai,_1816.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tani_Bunch%C5%8D#/media/File:8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ikeno Taiga 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ikeno_Taiga_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hakone restored. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hakone_restored.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Great Wave off Kanagawa2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Zenga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenga. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese aesthetics. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_aesthetics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Enso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Enso. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zenga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenga. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fujin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White Prunus Korin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Prunus_Korin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shunkeizu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shunkeizu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai%2C_1816.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kameda_B%C5%8Dsai#/media/File:%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai,_1816.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tani_Bunch%C5%8D#/media/File:8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ikeno Taiga 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ikeno_Taiga_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Hakone restored. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hakone_restored.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Great Wave off Kanagawa2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bodhidarma. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bodhidarma.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Enso.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ens%C5%8D#/media/File:Enso.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lacquer. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lacquer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese traditional dolls. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_traditional_dolls%23The_Edo_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edo period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese crafts. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_crafts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edo. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Edo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hinamatsuri. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinamatsuri. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/temari--2. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fujin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fujin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- White Prunus Korin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White_Prunus_Korin.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Shunkeizu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shunkeizu.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai%2C_1816.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kameda_B%C5%8Dsai#/media/File:%27Yearning_for_a_Pleasurable_Place%27_in_%27Mountains_of_the_Heart%27_by_Kameda_B%C3%B4sai,_1816.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tani_Bunch%C5%8D#/media/File:8_daoist_immortals_by_Tani_Buncho.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ikeno Taiga 001. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ikeno_Taiga_001.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Hakone restored. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hakone_restored.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Great Wave off Kanagawa2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Wave_off_Kanagawa2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bodhidarma. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bodhidarma.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Enso.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ens%C5%8D#/media/File:Enso.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Japanese_folk_art%3B_Temari%EF%BC%9B%E6%89%8B%E9%9E%A0.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Temari_(toy)#/media/File:Japanese_folk_art;_Temari%EF%BC%9B%E6%89%8B%E9%9E%A0.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Hinadolls. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hinadolls.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- WritingBox EightBridges OgataKorin. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WritingBox_EightBridges_OgataKorin.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 24.3: The Edo Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

24.4: The Modern Period

Japanese Art in the Meiji Period

The art of the Meiji period (1868–1912) was marked by a division between European and traditional Japanese styles.

Learning Objectives

Explain how the conflict caused by Europeanization and modernization during the Meiji Period was reflected in the artwork of the time

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Meiji period (September 1868 through July 1912) represents the first half of the Empire of Japan, during which Japanese society moved from being an isolated feudalism to its modern form.
- During this period, western style painting (Yōga) was officially promoted by the government, which sent promising young artists abroad for studies and hired foreign artists to establish an art curriculum at Japanese schools.
- After an initial burst of western style art, there was a revival of appreciation for traditional Japanese styles (Nihonga) led by art critic Okakura Kakuzo and educator Ernest Fenollosa.
- In the 1880s, western style art was banned from official exhibitions and was severely criticized by critics. Supported by Okakura and Fenollosa, the Nihonga style evolved with influences from the European pre-Raphaelite movement and European romanticism.
- In 1907, with the establishment of the Bunten exhibitions, both competing groups—Yōga and Nihonga—found mutual recognition and co-existence and even began the process toward mutual synthesis.

Key Terms

- **pre-Raphaelite movement**: An art movement founded by a group of English painters, poets, and critics with the intention of reforming art by rejecting what they considered to be the mechanistic approach first adopted by the Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo.
- **feudalism**: A social system based on personal ownership of resources, personal fealty of a lord by a subject, and a hierarchical social structure reinforced by religion.
- **Romanticism**: An artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century and in most areas was at its peak from 1800 to 1840; partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, it was also a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature.

Overview: The Meiji Period

The Meiji period (明 Meiji-jidai) was an era in Japanese history that extended from September 1868 through July 1912. This period represents the first half of Japan's time as an imperial power. Fundamental changes affected Japan's social structure, internal politics, economy, military, and foreign relations. Japanese society moved from being an isolated feudalism to its modern form. In art, this period was marked by the division into competing European and traditional indigenous styles. In 1907, with the establishment of the Bunten exhibition under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, both competing groups found mutual recognition and co-existence and even began the process towards mutual synthesis.

The Yōga Style

During the Meiji period, Japan underwent a tremendous political and social change in the course of the Europeanization and modernization campaign organized by the Meiji government. Western style painting (Yōga) was officially promoted by the government, which sent promising young artists abroad for studies. The Yōga style painters formed the Meiji Bijutsukai (Meiji Fine Arts Society) to hold its own exhibitions and to promote a renewed interest in western art. Foreign artists were also hired to

come to Japan to establish an art curriculum in Japanese schools. The Yōga style encompassed oil painting, watercolors, pastels, ink sketches, lithography, etching, and other techniques developed in western culture.

Yōga style painting of the Meiji period by Kuroda Seiki (1893): Yōga, in its broadest sense, encompasses oil painting, watercolors, pastels, ink sketches, lithography, etching, and other techniques developed in western culture. However, in a more limited sense, Yōga is sometimes used specifically to refer to oil painting.

The Nihonga Style

After an initial burst of western style art, however, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. Led by art critic Okakura Kakuzo and educator Ernest Fenollosa, there was a revival of appreciation for traditional Japanese styles (Nihonga). In the 1880s, western style art was banned from official exhibitions and was severely criticized by critics. Supported by Okakura and Fenollosa, the Nihonga style evolved with influences from the European pre-Raphaelite movement and European romanticism. Paintings of this style were made in accordance with traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques, and materials based on traditions over a thousand years old.

Nihonga style painting: *Black Cat* by Kuroki Neko, 1910): Nihonga style paintings were made in accordance with traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques, and materials. While based on traditions over a thousand years old, the term was coined in the Meiji period of the Imperial Japan to distinguish such works from Western style paintings, or Yōga.

Japanese Art in the Showa Period

During the Shōwa period, Japan shifted toward totalitarianism until its defeat in World War II, when it led an economic and cultural recovery.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline describing the upheaval, occupation, democratic reforms, and economic boom of the pre- and post-war Shōwa period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Shōwa period in Japanese history corresponds to the reign of the Shōwa Emperor, Hirohito, from December 25, 1926 through January 7, 1989.
- Japanese painting in the pre-war Shōwa period was largely dominated by the work of Yasui Sōtarō (1888–1955) and Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888–1986).
- During World War II, government controls and censorship meant that only patriotic themes could be expressed, and many artists were recruited into the government propaganda effort.
- After the end of World War II in 1945, many artists began working in art forms derived from the international scene, moving away from local artistic developments into the mainstream of world art.

Key Terms

- **Treaty of San Francisco**: A treaty between Japan and part of the Allied Powers, officially signed by 48 nations on September 8, 1951 and coming into force on April 28, 1952; representing the official conclusion of World War II, it ended Japan's position as an imperial power and allocated compensation to Allied civilians and former prisoners of war who had suffered Japanese war crimes.
- **Surrealism**: An artistic movement and an aesthetic philosophy, pre-dating abstract expressionism, that aims for the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative powers of the subconscious.
- **fascism**: A political regime having totalitarian aspirations, ideologically based on a relationship between business and the centralized government, business-and-government control of the market place, repression of criticism or opposition, a leader cult, and exalting the state and/or religion above individual rights.

Overview: The Shōwa Period

The Shōwa period in Japanese history corresponds to the reign of the Shōwa Emperor, Hirohito (裕), from December 25, 1926 through January 7, 1989. The Shōwa period was longer than the reign of any previous Japanese emperor. During the pre-1945 period, Japan moved toward political totalitarianism, ultra-nationalism, and fascism, culminating in Japan's invasion of China in 1937. This was part of an overall global period of social upheavals and conflicts such as the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Defeat in the Second World War brought radical change to Japan. For the first and only time in its history, Japan was occupied by foreign powers. This occupation by the United States on behalf of the Allied Forces (which included the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China) lasted seven years. Allied occupation brought forth sweeping democratic reforms, leading to the end of the emperor's status as a living god and the transformation of Japan into a democracy with a constitutional monarch. In 1952, with the Treaty of San Francisco, Japan became a sovereign nation once more and underwent an economic revitalization. In these ways, the pre-1945 and post-war periods regard completely different states: the pre-1945 Shōwa period (1926–1945) concerns the Empire of Japan, while the post-1945 Shōwa period (1945–1989) was a part of the State of Japan.

Art in the Pre-War Shōwa Period

Japanese painting in the pre-war Shōwa period was largely dominated by Yasui Sōtarō (1888–1955) and Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888–1986). These artists introduced the concepts of pure art and abstract painting to the Nihonga tradition (a style based on traditional Japanese art forms) and thus created a more interpretative version of that genre. Yasui Sōtarō was strongly influenced by the realistic styles of the French artists Jean-François Millet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Paul Cézanne; he incorporated clear outlines and vibrant colors in his portraits and landscapes, combining western realism with the softer touches of traditional Nihonga techniques. This trend was further developed by Leonard Foujita (also known as Fujita Tsuguharu) and the Nika Society to encompass surrealism. To promote these trends, the Independent Art Association was formed in 1930.

Portrait of Chin-Jung (1934) by Yasui Sōtarō. The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.: Yasui Sōtarō was strongly influenced by the the realistic styles of the French artists Jean-François Millet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and, in particular, Paul Cézanne. He incorporated clear outlines and vibrant colors in his portraits and landscapes, combining western realism with the softer touches of traditional Nihonga techniques.

By the early 20th century, European art forms were also introduced into Japanese architecture. Their marriage with traditional Japanese styles of architecture produced notable buildings like the Tokyo Train Station and the National Diet Building that still exist today.

Tokyo Station: Tokyo Station opened on December 20, 1914, and was heavily influenced by European architectural styles.

Art in the Post-War Shōwa Period

During World War II, government controls and censorship meant that only patriotic themes could be expressed, and many artists were recruited into the government propaganda effort. After the end of World War II in 1945, many artists began working in art forms derived from the international scene, moving away from local artistic developments into the mainstream of world art. Traditional Japanese conceptions endured, however, particularly in the use of modular space in architecture, certain spacing intervals in music and dance, a propensity for certain color combinations, and characteristic literary forms.

Japanese Art after World War II

After World War II, Japanese artists became preoccupied with the mechanisms of urban life and moved from abstraction to anime-influenced art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the flourishing of painting, calligraphy, and printmaking after World War II

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In the post-World War II period of Japanese history, the government-sponsored Japan Art Academy (Nihon Geijutsuin) was formed in 1947, containing both nihonga and yōga divisions.
- After World War II, painters, calligraphers, and printmakers flourished in the big cities, particularly Tokyo, and became preoccupied with the mechanisms of urban life, reflected in the flickering lights, neon colors, and frenetic pace of their abstractions.
- After the abstractions of the 1960s, the 1970s saw a return to realism strongly flavored by the “op” and “pop” art movements, embodied in the 1980s in the explosive works of Ushio Shinohara.
- By the late 1970s, the search for Japanese qualities and a national style caused many artists to reevaluate their artistic ideology and turn away from what some felt were the empty formulas of the West. Contemporary paintings began to make conscious use of traditional Japanese art.
- There are also a number of contemporary painters in Japan whose work is largely inspired by anime subcultures and other aspects of popular and youth culture, such as the work of Takashi Murakami.

Key Terms

- **Rinpa school**: One of the major historical schools of Japanese painting, created in 17th-century Kyoto by Hon’ami Kōetsu (1558–1637) and Tawaraya Sōtatsu (d. c. 1643).
- **Nitten**: The annual Japan Art Academy Awards and the premier art exhibition in Japan.

Japanese Art After World War II

Welcoming the new post-World War II period of Japanese history, the government-sponsored Japan Art Academy (Nihon Geijutsuin) was formed in 1947. The Academy contained both nihonga (traditional Japanese) and yōga (European-influenced) divisions. Government sponsorship of art exhibitions had ended, but they were replaced by private exhibitions, such as the Nitten, on an even larger scale. Although the Nitten was initially the exhibition of the Japan Art Academy, since 1958 it has been run by a separate private corporation. Participation in the Nitten became almost a prerequisite for nomination to the Japan Art Academy.

The arts of the Edo and prewar periods (1603–1945) had been supported by merchants and urban people, but they were not as popular as the arts of the postwar period. After World War II, painters, calligraphers, and printmakers flourished in the big cities—particularly Tokyo—and became preoccupied with the mechanisms of urban life, reflected in the flickering lights, neon colors, and frenetic pace of their abstractions. Styles of the New York-Paris art world were fervently embraced. After the abstractions of the 1960s, the 1970s saw a return to realism strongly flavored by the “op” and “pop” art movements, embodied in the 1980s in the explosive works of Ushio Shinohara.

Ushio Shinohara

Japanese painter Ushio Shinohara paint boxing at SUNY New Paltz, 2012.

Many such outstanding avant-garde artists worked both in Japan and abroad, winning international prizes. Some of these artists felt more identified with the international school of art rather than anything specifically Japanese. By the late 1970s, the search for Japanese qualities and a national style caused many artists to reevaluate their artistic ideology and turn away from what some felt were the empty formulas of the West. Contemporary paintings within the modern idiom began to make conscious use of traditional Japanese art forms, devices, and ideologies.

Mono-ha

Mono-ha is the name given to group of 20th century Japanese artists. The mono-ha artists explored the encounter between natural and industrial materials, such as stone, steel plates, glass, light bulbs, cotton, sponge, paper, wood, wire, rope, leather, oil, and water, arranging them in mostly unaltered, ephemeral states. The works focus as much on the interdependency of these various elements and the surrounding space as on the materials themselves. A number of mono-ha artists turned to painting to recapture traditional nuances in spatial arrangements, color harmonies, and lyricism.

Nihonga, Rinpa, and Kano Influence

Japanese-style, or nihonga painting continued in a pre-war fashion, updating traditional expressions while retaining their intrinsic character. Some artists within this style still painted on silk or paper with traditional colors and ink, while others used new materials, such as acrylics.

Many other older schools of art were still practiced, most notably those of the Edo and pre-war periods. For example, the decorative naturalism of the Rinpa school, characterized by brilliant, pure colors and bleeding washes, was reflected in the work of many artists of the postwar period in the 1980s art of Hikosaka Naoyoshi. The realism of Maruyama Ōkyo's School and the calligraphic and spontaneous Japanese style of the gentlemen-scholars were both widely practiced in the 1980s. At times, all of these schools (along with older ones, such as the Kano School ink traditions) were drawn on by contemporary artists in the Japanese style and in the modern idiom. Many Japanese-style painters were honored with awards and prizes as a result of renewed popular demand for Japanese-style art beginning in the 1970s. More and more, the international modern painters also drew on the Japanese schools as they turned away from Western styles in the 1980s. The tendency had been to synthesize East and West, and some artists such as Shinoda Toko had already leapt the gap between the two. Shinoda's bold sumi ink abstractions were inspired by traditional calligraphy but were realized as lyrical expressions of modern abstraction.

Anime Influence

There are also a number of contemporary painters in Japan whose work is largely inspired by anime subcultures and other aspects of popular and youth culture. Takashi Murakami is perhaps among the most famous and popular of these, along with the other artists in his Kaikai Kiki studio collective. His work centers on expressing issues and concerns of post-war Japanese society through seemingly innocuous forms. He draws heavily from anime and related styles but produces paintings and sculptures in media more traditionally associated with fine arts, intentionally blurring the lines between commercial, popular, and fine arts.

Sculpture by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami at Versailles, France. 2007–2010 bronze and gold leaf.: Takashi Murakami is perhaps the most famous and popular contemporary Japanese artist whose work is largely inspired by anime subcultures and other aspects of popular and youth culture.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Meiji period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Meiji_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_painting%23Prewar_period_.281868-1945.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- feudalism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/feudalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pre-Raphaelite movement. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/pre-Raphaelite%20movement. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kuroki Neko by Hishida Shunso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuroki_Neko_by_Hishida_Shunso.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kuroda Maiko. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuroda_Maiko.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Treaty of San Francisco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty%20of%20San%20Francisco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Showa period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Showa_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Japanese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- fascism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/fascism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Surrealism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Surrealism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kuroki Neko by Hishida Shunso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuroki_Neko_by_Hishida_Shunso.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kuroda Maiko. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuroda_Maiko.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Tokyo_station05s3872.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art#/media/File:Tokyo_station05s3872.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yasui Sotaro-Chin Jung. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Yasui_Sotaro-Chin_Jung.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Japanese painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_painting%23Prewar_period_.281868-1945.29. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nitten. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nitten. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- rimpa school. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/rimpa%20school. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mono-ha. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mono-ha. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kuroki Neko by Hishida Shunso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuroki_Neko_by_Hishida_Shunso.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kuroda Maiko. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuroda_Maiko.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1280px-Tokyo_station05s3872.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_art#/media/File:Tokyo_station05s3872.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yasui Sotaro-Chin Jung. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Yasui_Sotaro-Chin_Jung.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Oval Buddha Takashi Murakami at Versailles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oval_Buddha_Takashi_Murakami_at_Versailles.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 24.4: The Modern Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

25: The Americas After 1300 CE

25.1: Mesoamerica

25.2: The Aztecs

25.3: The Incas

25.4: North America

This page titled 25: The Americas After 1300 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

25.1: Mesoamerica

The Mixteca-Puebla Tradition

The Mixteca-Puelba tradition of artistry originates from the pre-Columbian Mixtec peoples from the region of Puebla, Mesoamerica.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the Mixteca-Puebla tradition of art as it relates to Mixteca arts and crafts

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Mixteca were one of the major indigenous civilizations of Mesoamerica; today they inhabit the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Puebla.
- Primarily producing work in stone, wood, and metal, the artistry of the Mixteca people was well-regarded throughout ancient Mesoamerica.
- Mixteca-Puebla art, which archaeologists classify as distinct from other Mixteca arts and crafts, is a variant of iconography and commonly found in pottery.

Key Terms

- **phonetic**: Relating to the sounds of spoken language.
- **iconography**: The branch of art history that studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images.

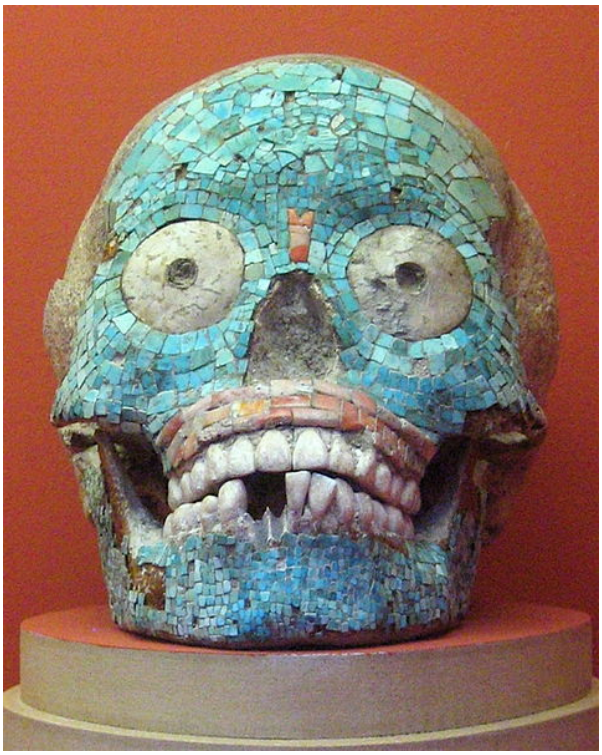
The Mixteca People

Puebla, a state located in East-Central Mexico, originated from the city of the same name founded by the Spanish in 1531. In pre-Columbian times, the region was inhabited by people of many ethnicities, including the Mixteca. The term *Mixteca* (or Mixtecs) comes from the Nahuatl word *mixtecah*, meaning “cloud people.” One of the major indigenous civilizations of Mesoamerica, today they inhabit the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Puebla in the La Mixteca region. They are the fourth largest indigenous group in Mexico, although many have emigrated out of traditional Mixteca areas into other parts of the state, Mexico City, and even the United States.

Mixteca-Puebla Art

The work of Mixteca artisans was well-regarded throughout ancient Mesoamerica. Primarily producing work in stone, wood, and metal, they were well known for their “Codices,” or phonetic pictures in which their history and genealogies were written. They were also known for their exceptional mastery of jewelry, particularly gold and turquoise. Mixteca goldsmiths played an important role in the tributes paid to the Aztecs during the height of the Aztec Empire.

Mixteca-Puebla style Pipe with Bluebird, A.D. 1100–1400: Mexico, Western Oaxaca or Puebla



Mosaic Skull, 1400–1521: Bone/ivory/horn/shell/bamboo human skull with turquoise and jadeite

Archeologists classify Mixteca-Puebla art as distinct from other Mixteca arts and crafts. This variant of artistic style and iconography, commonly found in pottery, became associated with traits of the Toltec archaeological tradition in Mesoamerican culture during the early post-classic period (800–1000). The temples of a Pre-Columbian Maya walled city are situated on 12-meter tall cliffs in Tulum in the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico; a mural can still be seen on the eastern wall that resembles the Mixteca-Puebla style of art. Using vast trading networks, the Mixteca-Puebla style of art spread from Cholula, a city located in the center west of Puebla, to other areas in the Valley of Mexico and eventually to Mesoamerica.

Large Mixteca-Puebla style bowl: Preserved in the Museum of the Americas, Madrid, from the late Post-classic Mexico.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- phonetic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/phonetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tulum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulum. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Toltec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Toltec. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Puebla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Puebla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cholula, Puebla. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cholula,_Puebla. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mixtec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixtec%23Language.2C_codices.2C_and_artwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- iconography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/iconography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- WLA lacma 1100 ceramic pipe. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WLA_lacma_1100_ceramic_pipe.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- WLA lacma Mosaic Skull Mixteca-Puebla Style. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WLA_lacma_Mosaic_Skull_Mixteca-Puebla_Style.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Large Mixtec bowl, Museo de Amu00e9rica. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Large_Mixtec_bowl,_Museo_de_Am%C3%A9rica.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 25.1: Mesoamerica is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

25.2: The Aztecs

Architecture of the Aztecs

Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital city from 1325–1521, is one of the most magnificent architectural accomplishments of the Aztec empire.

Learning Objectives

Describe the architecture of the Aztecs

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Founded in 1325, Tenochtitlan became the largest city in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica until it was captured by the Spanish in 1521.
- Built on a series of islets on the shores of Lake Texcoco, Tenochtitlan covered 3.1 to 5.2 square miles and was home to an estimated 212,500 people, which made it the 4th largest city in the world at the time.
- In the heart of the city were the massive Templo Mayor, a palace, two zoos, a botanical garden, a ceremonial center, and some 45 public buildings.
- When the Spanish conquered Tenochtitlan in 1521, Hernan Cortés ordered the destruction of the city and the rebuilding of the capital of New Spain atop its ruins. Today the ruins of Tenochtitlan are located in the central part of Mexico City.

Key Terms

- **islet**: A small island.

Aztec Architecture: An Overview

Aztec architecture refers to pre-Columbian architecture of the Aztec civilization, a civilization that dominated central Mexico in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. Their capital was Tenochtitlan on the shore of Lake Texcoco, the site of modern-day Mexico City. The architecture of the Aztecs was some of the finest in the world at the Aztecs' height of power, and Tenochtitlan is perhaps the finest example of their advances.

History of Tenochtitlan

Tenochtitlan was the capital city of the expanding Aztec empire during the 15th century. Founded in 1325, it became the largest city in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica until it was captured by the Spanish in 1521. An ancient Aztec prophecy predicted that the wandering tribes would find the destined site for a great city. The Aztecs saw this vision on what was then a small swampy island in Lake Texcoco. Not to be deterred by the unfavorable terrain, they set about building their city, and a thriving culture soon developed. The small natural island was perpetually enlarged as Tenochtitlan grew to become the largest and most powerful city in Mesoamerica, with the Aztec civilization coming to dominate other tribes all around Mexico.

The power of Tenochtitlan was maintained by tributes paid by conquered lands and the capital grew in influence, size, and population. When Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés arrived in Tenochtitlan on November 8, 1519, he and his men were in awe at the sight of the splendid city. At this point it was the fourth largest city in the world—following Paris, Venice, and Constantinople—with an estimated population of 212,500 people (although some sources put the number as high as 350,000).

In 1521, the Spanish conquered Tenochtitlan, and Cortés directed the systematic destruction of the city and the rebuilding of the capital of New Spain atop its ruins. The resulting weight of the structures caused the ruins of Tenochtitlan to sink into the sediment of the lake. The location of the dismantled Temple Mayor was rediscovered only in the early 20th century.

The Architecture of the City

Tenochtitlan covered an estimated 3.1 to 5.2 square miles on the western side of the shallow Lake Texcoco. Built on a series of islets, the city plan was based on a symmetrical layout that was divided into four city sections, known as *campans.* Each campan was divided into 20 districts (*calpullis*), and each district was crossed by streets. The city was interlaced with canals used for

transportation. At the heart of the city was the sacred precinct, home to about 45 public buildings, temples, and schools. Houses were made of wood and loam, and roofs were made of reed; pyramids, temples, and palaces were generally made of stone. The city center was also home to the ceremonial center, built inside of a 300-square meter walled square.

Surrounding the city and floating on the shallow flats of Lake Texcoco were enormous chinampas—long raised plant beds set upon the shallow lake bottom. Misnamed “floating gardens,” they were a very efficient agricultural system used to grow food for the city’s many residents. Two double aqueducts, each more than 2.5 miles long and made of terracotta, provided the city with fresh water for cleaning and washing.

Templo Mayor

Among the most famous of the buildings in the city center was the Templo Mayor, the twin pyramid dedicated to the Aztecs’ patron deities: Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and Tlaloc, god of rain and agriculture, each of which had a shrine at the top of the pyramid with separate staircases. The Great Temple measured approximately 328 ft by 262 ft at its base, dominating the Sacred Precinct. Construction of the first temple began sometime after 1325, and it was rebuilt six times. Mexican pyramids were typically expanded by building over prior ones, using the bulk of the former as a base for the latter, as later rulers sought to expand the temple to reflect the growing greatness of the city of Tenochtitlan.

The fourth temple was constructed between 1440 and 1481 during the reigns of Moctezuma I and Axayacatl. This stage is considered to have the richest of the architectural decorations, as well as sculptures. Its great platform was decorated with serpents and braziers, some of which are in the form of monkeys and some in the form of Tlaloc. At this time, the stairway to the shrine of Tlaloc was defined by a pair of undulating serpents, and in the middle of this shrine was a small altar defined by a pair of sculpted frogs. The circular monolith of Coyolxauhqui also dates from this time.

Templo Mayor: Scale model of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan, showing the various stages as it was enlarged over time.

The seventh and last temple is what Hernán Cortés and his men saw when they arrived to Tenochtitlan in 1519. Very little of this layer remains because of the destruction the Spaniards wrought when they conquered the city: only a platform to the north and a section of paving in the courtyard on the south side can still be seen. The pyramid was composed of four sloped terraces with a passage between each level, topped by a great platform that measured approximately 262 by 328 feet. It had two stairways to access the two shrines on the top platform. The two temples were approximately 200 feet in height, and each had large braziers where the sacred fires continuously burned. The entrance of each temple had statues of robust and seated men, which supported the standard-bearers and banners of handmade bark paper. Each stairway was defined by balustrades flanking the stairs terminating in menacing serpent heads at the base; these stairways were used only by the priests and sacrificial victims. The entire building was originally covered with stucco and polychrome paint.

The deities were housed inside the temple, shielded from the outside by curtains. The idol of Huitzilopochtli was modeled from amaranth seeds held together with honey and human blood. Inside were bags containing jade, bones, and amulets to give life to the

god. This figure was constructed annually, and it was richly dressed and fitted with a mask of gold for his festival held during the Aztec month of Panquetzaliztli. At the end of the festival, the image was broken apart and shared among the populace to be eaten.

Ruins of Templo Mayor: While the location of the ruins of Templo Mayor was rediscovered in the early 20th century, major excavations did not take place until 1978 to 1982.

The Palace of Moctezuma and Other Buildings

Other notable buildings in the city center included the temple of Quetzalcoatl; the tlachtli (ball game court) with the tzompantli or rack of skulls; the Sun Temple, which was dedicated to Tonatiuh; the Eagle's House, which was associated with warriors and the ancient power of rulers; the platforms for the gladiatorial sacrifice; and some minor temples. Outside of the city center was the palace of Moctezuma with 100 rooms, each one with its own bath, which was used by the lords and ambassadors of allies and conquered people. The palace also had two houses or zoos, one for birds of prey and another for other birds, reptiles, and mammals. About 300 people were dedicated to the care of these animals. Also contained within the palace were a botanical garden and an aquarium, which had 10 ponds of salt water and 10 ponds of fresh water and contained both fish and aquatic birds.

Sculpture of the Aztecs

The Aztecs excelled in creating sculptures made of stone and other material, ranging from small works of art to monumental buildings.

Learning Objectives

Explain the symbolism of Aztec "skull art" and carved mirrors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Aztec sculpture often represented gods and mythical creatures, and it was commonly expressed through ceramics, architecture, freestanding three-dimensional stone works, and relief work.
- The grand city of Tenochtitlan contained some of the finest examples of Aztec sculpture, from its temples and pyramids to its elaborate stone palaces.
- A great deal of Aztec sculpture incorporated the skull motif —what is today known in Mexico as "skull art."
- Large carved obsidian mirrors were fashioned from stone and served a number of uses, from decorative to spiritual.The Aztec calendar stone is a large monolithic sculpture that was excavated in Mexico City in 1790 and is believed to have served multiple purposes.

Key Terms

- **freestanding**: Standing or set apart; not attached to anything.
- **relief**: A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.
- **motif**: A recurring or dominant element in a work of art.
- **monolith**: A large single block of stone, used in architecture and sculpture.

Overview: Aztec Sculpture

As with many Mesoamerican cultures, the Aztecs excelled in stone sculptures that ranged from small works of art to monumental buildings. Aztec sculpture often took the form of striking carvings of Aztec gods or mythical creatures, and it was expressed through ceramics, architecture, freestanding three-dimensional stone works, and relief work. The grand city of Tenochtitlan contained some of the finest examples of Aztec sculpture, from its temples and pyramids to its elaborate stone palaces.

An Aztec Sculpture of the Mythological Serpent, Xiuhcoatl: Xiuhcoatl, a mythological serpent in Aztec religion, was a common subject of Aztec art.

Aztec Motifs

Skull Art

A great deal of Aztec sculpture incorporated the skull motif; today this is known in Mexico as “skull art.” In Aztec tradition, both death and life are worshiped together, and the skull—a symbol of death—was a promise of resurrection. The use of skulls and skeletons in Aztec art originated before the conquest, and the Aztecs often carved skulls into their stone sculptures, monoliths of lava, and masks of obsidian and jade.

Aztec Statue of Coatlicue, the Earth Goddess: This sculpture is currently held in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City.

Carved Mirrors

A unique and versatile form of sculpture was the carved mirror. Obsidian mirrors in pre-Columbian times were fashioned from stone and served a number of uses, from decorative to spiritual. During the late Post-classic period (c.1200–1521), these mirrors, symbolizing rulership and power, were used in rituals to spiritually access the Aztec underworld and communicate with the realm of the dead. Aztec mirrors were originally held in wooden frames and were decorated with perishable ornaments, such as feathers. During the Spanish conquest, Hernán Cortés was known to have sent obsidian mirrors back to the royal court in Spain, where they became widely collected among the European aristocracy.

Aztec mirror: This mirror was carved from obsidian on a modern wooden base and is currently held in the Museum of the Americas, Madrid.

Calendar Stone

One of the most well-known Aztec sculptures is the Calendar Stone. Also known as the Mexican Sun Stone, Stone of the Sun, or Stone of the Five Eras, it is a large monolithic sculpture that was excavated in the Zócalo, Mexico City's main square, on December 17, 1790. The stone is 11.75 feet in diameter and 3.22 feet thick, and it weighs about 24 tons; on its surface are intricate carvings and sculpted motifs that refer to central components of the Mexica cosmogony. While the exact purpose of the stone is unclear, archaeologists and historians theorize that there could have been many functions to the stone, from spacial and time-related to political and spiritual.

Calendar Stone: The monolith of the Stone of the Sun, also known as the Aztec calendar stone (National Museum of Anthropology and History, Mexico City).

Featherwork of the Aztecs

Featherwork, or the working of feathers into clothing and artifacts, was an especially elaborate practice among the Aztecs.

Learning Objectives

Identify the ways in which feathers were incorporated into Aztec artifacts

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Endowed with sacred meaning, feathers were associated with the Aztec patron deity Huitzilopochtli and the mythical god of featherworkers, Coyotlinahual.
- Feathers were incorporated into many aspects of life, including traditional clothing, armor for warfare, elaborate headdresses, and beautiful works of art.
- One of the most famous featherwork artifacts is the elaborate feather headdress thought to be worn by Moctezuma II, the Aztec emperor at the time of the Spanish conquest.
- As Christianity spread through Mexico with the arrival of the Spanish, the use of feathers was adopted by Christians in the creation of religious objects.

Key Terms

- **evangelization**: The act of preaching the gospel or converting to Christianity.
- **patron**: An influential, wealthy person who supports an artist, craftsman, scholar, or aristocrat.
- **quetzal**: A strikingly colored bird with very long tail feathers, found in Guatemala and Costa Rica.

Aztec Featherwork

Featherwork is the working of feathers into a cultural artifact, which was an especially elaborate art form among the Aztecs. Endowed with sacred meaning, feathers were associated with the Aztec patron deity Huitzilopochtli and the mythical god of featherworkers, Coyotlinahual. Feathers were incorporated into many aspects of life, including traditional clothing, armor for warfare, elaborate headdresses, and beautiful works of art. Artisans specializing in featherwork often worked full-time to produce fine luxury goods for noble patrons during the height of the Aztec empire.

Symbol of Status

Perhaps the most well-known example of Aztec featherwork is the feather headdress, such as the one thought to be worn by Moctezuma II. As the Aztec emperor at the time of the Spanish conquest, his headdress was made of quetzal and other feathers and mounted in a base of gold and precious stone.

Aztec feather headdress: This Aztec headdress is often described as the crown of Moctezuma II. Today it is exhibited at the Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México.

Aztec warriors, or *cuāuhocēlōtl*, were distinguished in bravery and skill by their helmets and uniforms. In particular, the Eagle Aztec warriors wore feathered helmets to mark their ability. Ornamental shields, or *māhuizzoh chimalli*, were often decorated with motifs made in featherwork.

Clothing

The *huipil* is the most common traditional garment worn today by indigenous women from central Mexico to Central America. It is the only garment in Mexico that uses the pre-Hispanic art of featherwork, and the most complicated designs are generally known only to a few older master weavers. Designs are embedded into the fabric of the *huipil*, along with decorative elements such as embroidery, ribbon, feathers, lace, wax, and even gold thread. After the Aztec Empire was invaded and conquered by the Spanish, the *huipil* evolved to incorporate elements from Europe and even Asia.

Effects of Evangelization

In the early years of evangelization, the Aztec's use of feathers was adopted by Christians in the creation of religious objects, including feather paintings with Christian subjects. The sacredness of feathers, which for the Aztecs stemmed back long before the conquest, became associated with Christian forms of veneration. They were used to adorn triumphal arches, the bases of crosses, and the litters and canopies in which the host was carried during the Corpus Christi festival.

Codices of the Aztecs

Aztec codices, or pictorial manuscripts, are among the best primary sources of information on Aztec culture.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast pre-colonial and colonial Aztec codices

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Serving as calendars, ritual texts, almanacs, maps, and historical manuscripts of the Aztec people, codices spanned from before the Spanish conquest throughout the colonial era.
- Pre-colonial codices were largely pictorial in nature, while colonial codices contain Classical Nahuatl, Spanish, and even Latin.

- Few pre-colonial codices have survived, and codices created after the Spanish conquest were heavily influenced and even censored by the Spanish.
- The Florentine Codex, perhaps the most useful source of information on pre-colonial Aztec life, was created alongside a heavily censored version out of fear of Spanish authorities.

Key Terms

- **codex**: An early manuscript book bound in the modern manner, by joining pages, as opposed to a rolled scroll.
- **pictorial**: Described or otherwise represented by illustration rather than words.

Overview: Aztec Codices

The Aztec codices are manuscripts that were written and painted by *tlacuilos* (codex creators). One of the best primary sources of information on Aztec culture, they served as calendars, ritual texts, almanacs, maps, and historical manuscripts of the Aztec people, spanning from before the Spanish conquest through the colonial era. Pre-colonial codices differ from colonial codices in that they are largely pictorial and not meant to symbolize spoken or written narratives. The colonial-era codices not only contain Aztec pictograms, but also Classical Nahuatl (in the Latin alphabet), Spanish, and occasionally Latin.

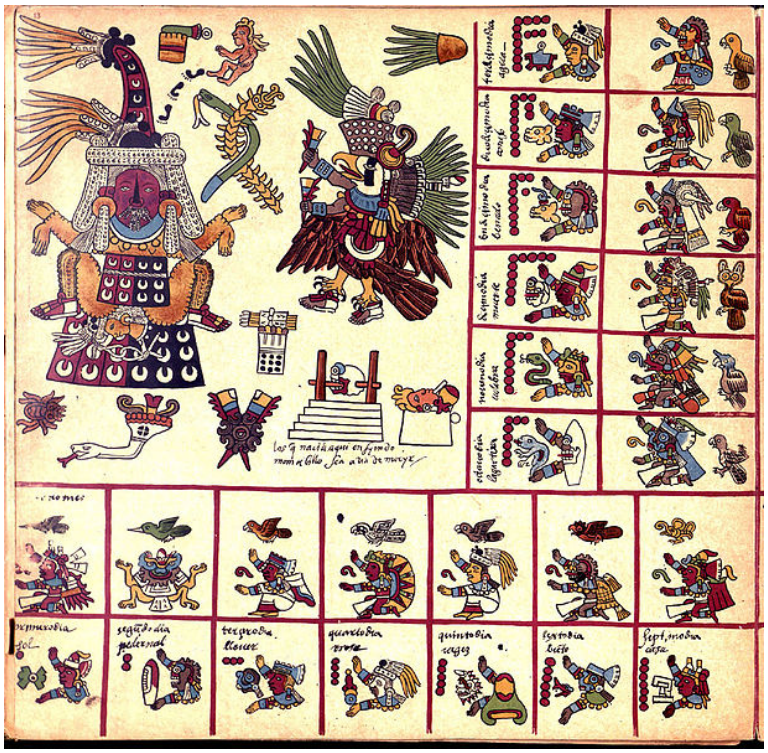
Scholars now have access to a body of around 500 colonial-era codices, as well as a limited number of pre-colonial codices, though there are very few surviving codices from the pre-colonial era. While the tradition of codex-painting endured over the transition to colonial culture, codex production declined under the control of Spanish authorities, suggesting Spanish influence or even censorship in codex production.

Well-known Codices

Codex Borbonicus

The Codex Borbonicus is a codex written by Aztec priests around the time of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Like all pre-colonial codices, it was originally entirely pictorial in nature, although some Spanish descriptions were later added. It is a single 46.5-foot long sheet of paper made from *amatl* (fig bark); although there were originally 40 accordion-folded pages, the first two and the last two pages are missing.

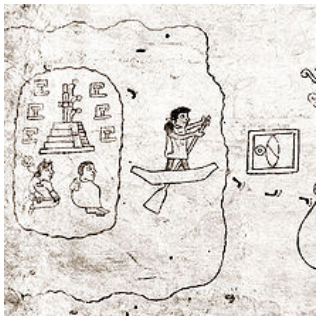
Codex Borbonicus can be divided into three sections. The first section is one of the most intricate surviving divinatory calendars (or *tonalamatl*), and most of the page is taken up with a painting of the ruling deity or deities. With the symbols of the calendar, divided into 13-day periods, Aztec priests were able to create horoscopes and divine the future. The second section documents the Mesoamerican 52-year cycle, showing in order the dates of the first days of each of these 52 solar years. The third section is focused on rituals and ceremonies, particularly those that end the 52-year cycle, when the “new fire” must be lit.



Page 13 of the Aztec Codex Borbonicus: This reproduction of page 13 of the Codex Borbonicus shows the 13th trecena (or 13-day period) of the Aztec sacred calendar. This 13th trecena was under the auspices of the goddess Tlazolteotl, who is portrayed wearing a flayed skin, giving birth to Cinteotl.

The Boturini Codex

The Boturini Codex was painted by an unknown Aztec author some time between 1530 and 1541, roughly a decade after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. It tells the story of the legendary Aztec journey from Aztlán to the Valley of Mexico. Rather than employing separate pages, the author used one long, folded sheet of amatl.



Detail of first page from the Boturini Codex: The first page of this Aztec codex depicts a figure on a boat, the departure from Aztlán.

The Florentine Codex

The Florentine Codex is perhaps the most useful source of information on Aztec life in the years before the Spanish conquest, even though the complete copy of the codex was not published until 1979. Prior to this, only a censored Spanish translation had been available. The codex is a set of 12 books created under the supervision of Bernardino de Sahagún between approximately 1540 and 1585. De Sahagún worked with the surviving Aztec wise men and taught *tlacuilos* to write the original Nahuatl accounts using the Latin alphabet. Because of fear of the Spanish authorities, he maintained the anonymity of his informants and wrote a heavily censored version in Spanish.

Codex Osuna

The Codex Osuna is a set of seven separate documents created in early 1565 to present evidence against the government of Viceroy Luis de Velasco during the 1563–66 inquiry by Jerónimo de Valderrama. In this codex, indigenous leaders claim non-payment for various goods and for various services performed by their people, including construction and domestic help.

The Aubin Codex

The Aubin Codex is a pictorial history of the Aztecs from their departure from Aztlán through the Spanish conquest to the early Spanish colonial period, ending in 1607. Consisting of 81 leaves, it was most likely started in 1576. It is also known as the "Manuscrito de 1576" (The Manuscript of 1576). Among other topics, the Aubin Codex has a native description of the massacre at the temple in Tenochtitlan in 1520.

Codex Magliabechiano

The Codex Magliabechiano, named after 17th century manuscript collector Antonio Magliabechi, was created during the mid-16th century. Primarily a religious document, it depicts the 20 day-names of the *tonalpohualli*, the 18 monthly feasts, the 52-year cycle, and various deities, indigenous religious rites, costumes, and cosmological beliefs.

Other Codices

- The Codex Mendoza was composed around 1541. It is divided into three sections: a history of each Aztec ruler and their conquest, a list of the tribute paid by each tributary province, and a general description of daily Aztec life.
- The Codex Cozcatzin, dated 1572, lists historical and genealogical information focused on Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan. The final page consists of astronomical descriptions in Spanish.
- The Codex Ixtlilxochitl is an early 17th century codex fragment detailing, among other subjects, a calendar of the annual festivals and rituals celebrated by the Aztec *teocalli* during the Mexican year. Each of the 18 months is represented by a god or historical character.
- The Libellus de Medicinalibus Indorum Herbis ("Little Book of the Medicinal Herbs of the Indians") is an herbal manuscript describing the medicinal properties of various plants used by the Aztecs. The Libellus is also known as the Badianus Manuscript, the Codex de la Cruz-Badiano, or the Codex Barberini.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- US History/Pre-Columbian. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/US_History/Pre-Columbian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tenochtitlan | LACMA. **Provided by**: Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Located at**: www.lacma.org/tenochtitlan. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tenochtitlan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenochtitlan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jack Maxfield, America: A.D. 1401 to 1500. September 17, 2013. **Provided by**: OpenStax CNX. **Located at**: http://cnx.org/content/m17798/latest/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- The History of the Native Peoples of the Americas/Mesoamerican Cultures/Aztecs. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The_History_of_the_Native_Peoples_of_the_Americas/Mesoamerican_Cultures/Aztecs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- islet. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/islet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Templo Mayor. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Templo_Mayor. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Templo_Mayor#/media/File:ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Templo Mayor 2007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Templo_Mayor_2007.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Mirrors in Mesoamerican culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirrors_in_Mesoamerican_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mexican art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Skull art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Skull_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec calendar stone. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_calendar_stone. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- relief. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/relief. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- freestanding. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/freestanding. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- motif. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/motif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- monolith. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/monolith. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Templo_Mayor#/media/File:ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Templo Mayor 2007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Templo_Mayor_2007.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec mirror, Museo de Amu00e9rica, Madrid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztec_mirror,_Museo_de_Am%C3%A9rica,_Madrid.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-1479_Stein_der_f%C3%BCnften_Sonne%2C_sog._Aztekenkalender%2C_Ollin_Tonatiuh_anagoria.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_calendar_stone#/media/File:1479_Stein_der_f%C3%BCnften_Sonne,_sog._Aztekenkalender,_Ollin_Tonatiuh_anagoria.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Aztec statue of Coatlicue, the earth goddess. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztec_statue_of_Coatlicue,_the_earth_goddess.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xiuhcoatl. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xiuhcoatl. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/evangelization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancient Styles in the New Era | LACMA. **Provided by**: Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Located at**: www.lacma.org/ancient-styles. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Coyotlinahual. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Coyotlinahual. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Huipil. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Huipil. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Featherwork. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Featherwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Montezuma's headdress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Montezuma's_headdress. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec warfare. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_warfare. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- patron. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/patron. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quetzal. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/quetzal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Templo_Mayor#/media/File:ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Templo Mayor 2007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Templo_Mayor_2007.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec mirror, Museo de Amu00e9rica, Madrid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztec_mirror,_Museo_de_Am%C3%A9rica,_Madrid.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-1479_Stein_der_f%C3%BCnften_Sonne%2C_sog._Aztekenkalender%2C_Ollin_Tonatiuh_anagoria.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_calendar_stone#/media/File:1479_Stein_der_f%C3%BCnften_Sonne,_sog._Aztekenkalender,_Ollin_Tonatiuh_anagoria.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Aztec statue of Coatlicue, the earth goddess. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztec_statue_of_Coatlicue,_the_earth_goddess.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xiuhcoatl. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xiuhcoatl. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aztecheaddress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztecheaddress.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex Feju00e9rvu00e1ry-Mayer. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Fej%C3%A9rv%C3%A1ry-Mayer. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The History of the Native Peoples of the Americas/Mesoamerican Cultures/Aztecs. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The_History_of_the_Native_Peoples_of_the_Americas/Mesoamerican_Cultures/Aztecs. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex Telleriano-Remensis. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Telleriano-Remensis. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec codices. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_codices. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nahuatl/Pronunciation. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Nahuatl/Pronunciation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pictorial. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pictorial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- codex. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/codex. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Codex Corbonicus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Borbonicus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Templo_Mayor#/media/File:ScaleModelTemploMayor.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Templo Mayor 2007. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Templo_Mayor_2007.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aztec mirror, Museo de Amu00e9rica, Madrid. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztec_mirror,_Museo_de_Am%C3%A9rica,_Madrid.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-1479_Stein_der_f%C3%BCnften_Sonne%2C_sog._Aztekenkalender%2C_Ollin_Tonatiuh_anagoria.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_calendar_stone#/media/File:1479_Stein_der_f%C3%BCnften_Sonne,_sog._Aztekenkalender,_Ollin_Tonatiuh_anagoria.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Aztec statue of Coatlicue, the earth goddess. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztec_statue_of_Coatlicue,_the_earth_goddess.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xiuhcoatl. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xiuhcoatl. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aztecheaddress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aztecheaddress.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 614px-Codex_Borbonicus_(p._13) (1) 2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Codex_Borbonicus_(p._13).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Aztec codices. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_codices. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 25.2: The Aztecs is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

25.3: The Incas

Architecture of the Inca

The Inca capital city of Cusco is one of the finest examples of both traditional Inca and colonial architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the important architectural sights of the Incan Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Kingdom of Cuzco was a small city-state of the Inca empire that served as the preeminent center of politics and religion.
- In 1535, the Spanish explorer Pizarro sacked much of the Inca city and built a new city over pre-colonial foundations.
- Because of its antiquity and importance, the center of the city retains many buildings, plazas, and streets from both pre-colonial and colonial times. These include the Temple of the Sun, the Cathedral of Santo Domingo, and the Plaza de Armas.
- Inca architecture is widely known for its fine masonry, which features precisely cut and shaped stones closely fitted without mortar ("dry").
- Machu Picchu is a 15th century Inca citadel situated on a mountain ridge near the city of Cusco; it is believed to have been built as an estate for the Inca emperor Pachacuti (1438–1472).

Key Terms

- **plateresque**: Pertaining to an ornate style of architecture of 16th century Spain suggestive of silver plate.
- **antiquity**: Ancient times; former ages; times long since past.

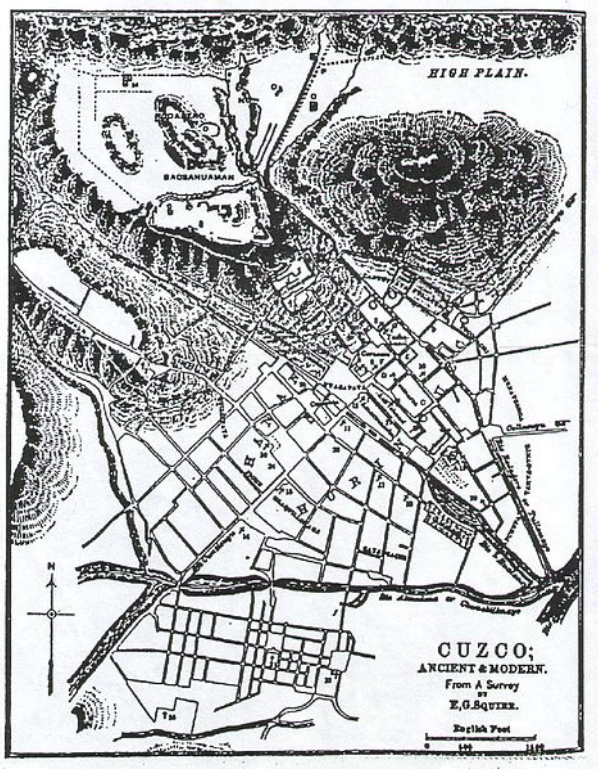
Background: The Inca Empire

The Inca Empire was the largest empire in pre-Columbian America. The civilization arose from the highlands of Peru sometime in the early 13th century, and the administrative, political, and military center of the empire was located in Cusco in modern-day Peru. Its last stronghold was conquered by the Spanish in 1572.

Incan architecture is the most significant pre-Columbian architecture in South America. The Incas inherited an architectural legacy from Tiwanaku, founded in the 2nd century BCE in present-day Bolivia. The capital of the Inca empire, Cusco, still contains many fine examples of Inca architecture, although many walls of Inca masonry have been incorporated into Spanish Colonial structures. The famous royal estate of Machu Picchu is a surviving example of Inca architecture; other significant sites include Saksaywaman and Ollantaytambo. The Incas also developed an extensive road system spanning most of the western length of the continent.

The City of Cusco

The Kingdom of Cusco was a small city-state in the Inca empire. Scholars have established that the Inca did not occupy the area—previously inhabited by the indigenous people of the Killke culture—until after 1200 CE, under the leadership of Manco Cápac. The Inca empire was divided into four *suyus* (regions) that met at the capital of Cuzco, which served as the preeminent center of politics and religion. The Inca created the city of Cuzco in the shape of a puma, a shape still visible in modern aerial photographs.



A map of Cuzco, by E.G. Squier, c. 1860: The puma shape of the city of Cusco is discernible, with the head at the upper left and the tail at the lower right.

Pizarro, the Spanish explorer and conquistador, sacked much of the city in 1535 during the Spanish invasion and built a new city over pre-colonial foundations. Because of its antiquity and importance, the center of the city retains many buildings, plazas, and streets from both pre-colonial and colonial periods. Remains of the Palace of the Incas, the Temple of the Sun, and the Temple of the Virgins of the Sun still stand. In some cases, the Inca buildings and foundations have proved to be stronger than the foundations built in present-day Peru.

Characteristics of Inca Architecture

Inca architecture is widely known for its fine masonry, which features precisely cut and shaped stones closely fitted without mortar ("dry"). However, despite this fame, most Inca buildings were actually made out of fieldstones or semi-worked stone blocks and dirt set in mortar; adobe walls were also quite common, usually laid over stone foundations. The material used in Inca buildings depended on the region; for instance, in the coast they used large rectangular adobe blocks, while in the Andes they used local stones.

The most common shape in Inca architecture was the rectangular building without any internal walls and roofed with wooden beams and thatch. There were several variations of this basic design, including gabled roofs, rooms with one or two of the long sides opened, and rooms that shared a long wall. Rectangular buildings were used for quite different functions in almost all Inca buildings, from humble houses to palaces and temples. Even so, there are some examples of curved walls on Inca buildings, mostly in regions outside the central area of the empire. Two-story buildings were infrequent; when they were built, the second floor was accessed from the outside via a stairway or high terrain rather than from the first floor. Wall apertures—including doors, niches, and windows—usually had a trapezoidal shape; they could be fitted with double or triple jambs as a form of ornamentation. Other kinds of decoration were scarce; some walls were painted or adorned with metal plaques, and in rare cases walls were sculpted with small animals or geometric patterns.

The most common composite form in Inca architecture was the *kancha*, a rectangular enclosure housing three or more rectangular buildings placed symmetrically around a central courtyard. Kancha units served widely different purposes as they formed the basis of simple dwellings as well as of temples and palaces; furthermore, several kancha could be grouped together to form blocks in Inca settlements. A testimony of the importance of these compounds in Inca architecture is that the central part of the Inca capital of

Cusco consisted of large kancha, including Qurikancha and the Inca palaces. The best preserved examples of kancha are found at Ollantaytambo, an Inca settlement located along the Urubamba River.

Machu Picchu

Machu Picchu is a 15th century Inca citadel situated on a mountain ridge 7,970 feet above sea level. It is located in the Cusco region above the Sacred Valley, which is 50 miles northwest of Cuzco. Most archaeologists believe that Machu Picchu was built as an estate for the Inca emperor Pachacuti (1438–1472). Often mistakenly referred to as the "Lost City of the Incas" (a title more accurately applied to Vilcabamba), it is the most familiar icon of Inca civilization. The Incas built the estate around 1450 but abandoned it a century later at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Although known locally, it was not known to the Spanish during the colonial period and remained unknown to the outside world until American historian Hiram Bingham brought it to international attention in 1911.

Machu Picchu was built in the classical Inca style, with polished dry-stone walls. Its three primary structures are the Inti Watana, the Temple of the Sun, and the Room of the Three Windows. Most of the outlying buildings have been reconstructed in order to give tourists a better idea of how they originally appeared.

The site is roughly divided into an urban sector and an agricultural sector, and into an upper town and a lower town. The temples are in the upper town, while the warehouses are in the lower. The architecture is adapted to the mountains: approximately 200 buildings are arranged on wide parallel terraces around an east-west central square, and the various compounds are long and narrow in order to exploit the terrain. Sophisticated channeling systems provided irrigation for the fields. Stone stairways set in the walls allowed access to the different levels across the site. The eastern section of the city is thought to have been residential, and the western section, separated by the square, is believed to have been for religious and ceremonial purposes. This western section contains the Torreón, a massive tower which may have been used as an observatory.

Machu Picchu: Machu Picchu is a 15th century Inca citadel situated on a mountain ridge 7,970 feet above sea level.

Spanish Architecture After the Conquest

After the conquest and the destruction of the city of Cusco, the Spanish built new structures over much of the Inca architecture. Some of the most noteworthy architectural sights in Cusco include the following:

- The Coricancha ("Golden Temple" or "Temple of the Sun," named for the gold plates covering its walls) was the most important sanctuary dedicated to the Inti (the Sun God) during the Inca Empire. Over the foundation of the Coricancha, Spanish colonists built the Convent of Santo Domingo in the Renaissance style. The Convent exceeds the height of many other buildings in the city.
- The Barrio de San Blas neighborhood includes houses built over Incan foundations, along with the oldest parish church in Cuzco. The church, built in 1563, houses a carved wooden pulpit that is considered the epitome of colonial era woodwork in the city.

- The Convent and Church of la Mercad, founded in 1536, was a Spanish complex that was destroyed in an earthquake in 1650 and rebuilt in 1675. Modeling the Baroque Renaissance style, it contains choir stalls, paintings, and wood carvings from the colonial era.
- The Spanish Cathedral of Santo Domingo was built in phases between 1539 and 1664 on the foundations of the Inca Palace of Viracocha. The cathedral presents late-Gothic, Baroque, and Plateresque interiors. It also has a strong example of colonial goldwork and wood carving. It is well known for a Cusco School painting of the Last Supper depicting Jesus and the 12 apostles feasting on guinea pig, a traditional Andean delicacy.
- The Plaza de Armas, known as the "Square of the Warrior" in the Inca era, has been the scene of several important events in the history of this city, such as Pizarro's proclamation of conquest over the city and the scene of the death of Túpac Amaru II, the indigenous leader of the resistance. The Spanish built stone arcades around the plaza that endure to this day.
- La Iglesia de la Compaña de Jesus was built by the Jesuits over the foundations of the palace of the Inca ruler Huayna Capac. It is considered one of the best examples of the colonial baroque style in the Americas. Its façade is carved in stone, and its main altar is made of carved wood covered with gold leaf.

Images of Cuzco: Top: Plaza de Armas; middle left: Temple of Coricancha; middle right: aerial view of Cusco; bottom left: Sacsayhuamán; bottom right: Cathedral of Cusco

Textiles of the Inca

The Incas were highly regarded for their textiles, which were influenced by the artistic works of the pre-Inca Chimú culture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the importance of the Incan weaving tradition and its relation to earlier Chimú culture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Inca textiles were widely manufactured for practical use, trade, tax collection, and decorative fashion.
- Textiles were widely prized within the empire—in part because they were somewhat easily transported—and were widely manufactured for tax collection and trade purposes. Cloth and textiles were divided by class, with llama wool used in more common clothing and the finer cloths of alpaca or vicuña wool reserved for royal and religious use. Specific designs and ornaments marked a person's status and nobility.
- The weaving tradition was very important to Incas in the creation of elaborate woven headdresses.

- Wealthy Inca men wore large gold and silver pendants hung on their chests, disks attached to their hair and shoes, and bands around their arms and wrists. Inca women adorned themselves with a metal fastening for their cloak called a *tupu*.

Key Terms

- **cochineal**: A vivid red dye made from the bodies of cochineal insects.
- **tunic**: A garment worn over the torso, with or without sleeves, and of various lengths reaching from the hips to the ankles.
- **vicuña**: A relative of the llama that lives in the high alpine areas of the Andes.

Background: Chimú Textiles

The Incas were highly regarded for their textiles, influenced by the artistic works of the pre-Inca Chimú culture. The Chimú, who arose about 900 CE, were conquered in a campaign led by the Inca ruler Tupac Inca Yupanqui around 1470 AD.

The Chimú embellished their fabrics with brocades, embroidery, fabric doubles, and painted fabrics. Textiles were sometimes adorned with feathers, gold, or silver plates. Colored dyes were created from plants containing tannin, mole, or walnut; these dyes also came from animals like the cochineal and minerals like clay, ferruginosa, and mordant aluminum. Garments were made of the wool of four animals: the guanaco, llama, alpaca, and vicuña. The people also used varieties of cotton that grew naturally in seven different colors. Clothing consisted of the Chimú loincloth, sleeveless shirts, small ponchos, and tunics.

Textiles in the Inca Empire

Textiles were widely prized within the Inca empire—in part because they were somewhat easily transported—and were widely manufactured for tax collection and trade purposes. Cloth and textiles were divided among the classes in the Inca empire. *Awaska* was used for common clothing and traditional household use and was usually made from llama wool. *Qunpi*, a finer cloth, was divided into two classes: it would either be made of alpaca wool and collected as tribute for use by royalty, or it would be woven from vicuña wool and used for royal and religious purposes. The finest textiles were reserved for the rulers as markers of their status. For example, Inca officials wore stylized tunics decorated with certain motifs, and soldiers of the Inca army had specific uniforms.

Tupa Inca tunic from around 1550: An example of Inca textiles. Inca officials wore stylized tunics decorated with certain motifs, while soldiers of the Inca army had specific uniforms.

The Weaving Tradition

The weaving tradition was very important to Incas in the creation of beautiful and elaborate woven headdresses. Royalty was clearly distinguished through decorative dress. Inca emperors, for example, wore woven hats trimmed with gold and wool tassels or topped with plumes or showy feathers. Incas also created elaborate feather decorations for men, such as headbands made into crowns of feathers, collars, and chest coverings. Wealthy Inca men wore large gold and silver pendants hung on their chests, disks attached to their hair and shoes, and bands around their arms and wrists. Inca women adorned themselves with a metal fastening for their cloak called a *tupu;* the head of the tupu was decorated with paint or silver, gold, or copper bells.

Metalwork of the Inca

The Inca were well-known for their use of gold, silver, copper, bronze, and other metals for tools, weapons, and decorative ornaments.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the Incan use of copper, bronze, silver, gold, and other metals

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Drawing much of their metalworking style from Chimú art, the Incas used metals for utilitarian purposes as well as ornaments and decorations.
- Copper and bronze were used for basic farming tools or weapons, while gold and silver were reserved for ornaments and decorations in temples and palaces of Inca royalty.
- Gold was especially revered for its sun-like reflective quality; the Inca people's reverence of gold has much to do with their worship of the sun and the sun god, *Inti*.
- Even though the Inca Empire contained many precious metals, the Incas did not value their metal as much as fine cloth.

Key Terms

- **Chimú**: A culture centered on Chimor, with the capital city of Chan Chan (in the Moche Valley of present-day Trujillo, Peru), which arose about 900 CE and was conquered by the Inca around 1470 CE.
- **metallurgist**: A person who works in metal.
- **Inca**: A member of the group of Quechuan peoples of highland Peru who established an empire from northern Ecuador to central Chile before the Spanish conquest.

Background

The Inca were well known for their use of gold, silver, copper, bronze, and other metals. Drawing much of their inspiration and style in metalworking from Chimú art, the Incas used metals for utilitarian purposes as well as ornaments and decorations. Although the Inca Empire contained a lot of precious metals, however, the Incas did not value their metal as much as fine cloth.

Andean bronze bottle, ca. 1300–1532: While this bottle was most likely made by Chimú artisans, Inca metalworkers adopted similar characteristics.

Many metalworkers were taken back to the capital city of Cusco after the fall of Chimú to continue their metalworking for the emperor because of their expertise. As part of a tax obligation to the commoners, mining was required in all the provinces, and copper, tin, gold, and silver were all obtained from mines or washed from the river gravels.

Golden plaque from Chimú culture: The Incans adopted much of their metalworking characteristics from the metalwork of Chimú. Because of their expertise, many metalworkers were taken back to the capital city of Cuzco to continue their metalworking for the emperor.

Tools and Weapons

Copper and bronze were used for basic farming tools or weapons, such as sharp sticks for digging, club-heads, knives with curved blades, axes, chisels, needles, and pins. The Incas had no iron or steel, so their armor and weaponry consisted of helmets, spears, and battle-axes made of copper, bronze, and wood. Metal tools and weapons were forged by Inca metallurgists and then spread throughout the empire.

Ornaments and Decorations in Metalwork

The Inca people's reverence of gold, in particular, had much to do with their worship of the sun and the sun god Inti. Gold's sun-like reflective quality made the precious metal even more highly regarded. Gold and silver were used for ornaments and decorations and reserved for the highest classes of Inca society, including priests, lords, and the *Sapa Inca*, or emperor. Gold and silver were common themes throughout the palaces of Inca emperors as well, and the temples of the Incas were strewn with sacred and highly precious metal objects. Thrones were ornately decorated with metals, and royalty dined on golden-plated dishes inlaid with decorative designs. Headdresses, crowns, ceremonial knives, cups, and ceremonial clothing were often inlaid with gold or silver.

The Spanish Conquest and Its Effects on Incan Art

After the fall of the Inca Empire, many aspects of Inca culture were systematically destroyed or irrevocably changed by Spanish conquerors.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the effects of the Spanish Conquest on the art and culture of the Inca

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Following the Spanish Conquest, the Inca population suffered a dramatic and quick decline, largely due to illness and disease. Many of those remaining were enslaved.

- Many aspects of Inca culture were systematically destroyed as cities and towns were pillaged, resulting in the loss of vast amounts of traditional artwork, craft, and architecture.
- The introduction of Christianity greatly impacted the art of the region, which began to reflect Christian themes alongside and in place of traditional Inca designs.
- Pizarro, the Spanish explorer and conquistador who was responsible for destroying much of the city of Cusco in 1535, built a new European- style city over pre-colonial foundations.The Spanish also brought with them new techniques such as oil painting on canvas, which fused with the artistic traditions of the region. This cultural melding could be seen in the works of the Cusco, Quito, and Chilote Schools.

Key Terms

- **irrevocably**: Beyond recall; in a manner precluding repeal.

Overview: The Spanish Conquest and the Fall of the Inca

The Spanish Conquest of the Inca Empire was catastrophic to the Inca people and culture. The Inca population suffered a dramatic and quick decline following contact with the Europeans. This decline was largely due to illness and disease such as smallpox, which is thought to have been introduced by colonists and conquistadors. It is estimated that parts of the empire, notably the Central Andes, suffered a population decline amounting to a staggering 93% of the pre-Columbian population by 1591.

As an effect of this conquest, many aspects of Inca culture were systematically destroyed or irrevocably changed. In addition to disease and population decline, a large portion of the Inca population—including artisans and crafts people—was enslaved and forced to work in the gold and silver mines. Cities and towns were pillaged, along with a vast amount of traditional artwork, craft, and architecture, and new buildings and cities were built by the Spanish on top of Inca foundations.

The execution of the Inca: Spaniards burning the Inca leader Atahualpa at the stake, following their conquest of the Inca people.

The Role of Christianity

Beginning at the time of conquest, art of the central Andes region began to change as new techniques were introduced by the Spanish invaders, such as oil paintings on canvas. The spread of Christianity had a great influence on both the Inca people and their artwork as well. As Pizarro and the Spanish colonized the continent and brought it under their control, they forcefully converted many to Christianity, and it wasn't long before the entire region was under Christian influence. As a result, early art from the colonial period began to show influences of both Christianity and Inca religious themes, and traditional Inca styles of artwork were adopted and altered by the Spanish to incorporate Christian themes.

Spanish Architecture

Pizarro, the Spanish explorer and conquistador who was responsible for destroying much of the city of Cusco in 1535, built a new European-style city over pre-colonial foundations. For instance, the Convent of Santo Domingo was built over the Coricancha ("Golden Temple" or "Temple of the Sun," named for the gold plates covering its walls), which had been the most important

sanctuary dedicated to the Inti (the Sun God) during the Inca Empire. The Convent was built in the Renaissance style and exceeds the height of many other buildings in the city.

The Convent and Church of la Mercad were similarly modeled on the Baroque Renaissance style, containing choir stalls, paintings, and wood carvings from the colonial era. The Cathedral of Santo Domingo was built on the foundations of the Inca Palace of Viracocha and presents late-Gothic, Baroque, and Plateresque interiors; it also has a strong example of colonial goldwork and wood carving. La Iglesia de la Compaña de Jesus was later constructed by the Jesuits over the foundations of the palace of the Inca ruler Huayna Capac, and is considered one of the best examples of the colonial baroque style in the Americas. Its façade is carved in stone, and its main altar is made of carved wood covered with gold leaf.

European Style Art

The majority of artistic efforts after the initial conquest were directed at evangelism; a number of schools of painting emerged that exemplify this. Indigenous artists were taught European techniques but retained styles that were representative of their local sensibilities. During the 1700s and early 1800s, the Spanish Baroque aesthetic was transplanted to central and South America and became especially influential, developing its own variations in different regions.

The Cusco School

The Cusco School was a Roman Catholic art movement that began in Cusco, Peru during the early colonial period. Initially developed by the Spanish to train local artists in the European tradition for the purpose of proselytizing, the style soon spread through Latin America to places as distant as the Andes, as well as to the places in present-day Bolivia and Ecuador. Cusco is considered to be the first location where the Spanish systematically taught European artistic techniques such as oil painting and perspective to Indigenous people in the Americas. Bishop Manuel de Lollinedo y Angulo, a collector of European art, was a major patron of the Cusco School and acted as a patron to such prominent artists as Basilio Santa Cruz Puma Callao, Antonio Sinchi Roca Inka, and Marcos Rivera. Cusco painting is characterized by exclusively religious subject matter; warped perspective; frequent use of the colors red, yellow, and earth tones; and an abundance of gold leaf. Artists often adapted the subject matter of paintings to include native flora and fauna. Most of the paintings were completed anonymously, a result of pre-Columbian traditions that viewed art as a communal undertaking.

Example of Cusco painting: Cusco painting is characterized by exclusively religious subject matter; warped perspective; frequent use of the colors red, yellow, and earth tones; and an abundance of gold leaf.

The Quito School

The Quito School (Escuela Quitena) developed in the territory of the Royal Audience of Quito during the colonial period. The artistic production of this period was an important means of income for the area at the time. The Quito School was founded in 1552 by the Franciscan priest Jodoco Ricke, who transformed a seminary into an art school to train the first artists. The work of this period represents a long process of mixed-heritage blending of indigenous people and Europeans, both culturally and genetically.

Quito School artworks are known for their combination of European and Indigenous stylistic features, including Baroque, Flemish, Rococo, and Neoclassical elements. The technique of *encarnado*, or the simulation of the color of human flesh, was used on sculptures to make them appear more realistic. Another unique characteristic of the style was the application of *aguada*, or watercolor paint, on top of gold leaf or silver paint, giving it a unique metallic sheen. The racial blending of the time is reflected aesthetically in Quito School artworks in figures with mixed European and Indigenous traits, both in features and clothing. Artists included local plants and animals instead of traditional European foliage, and scenes were located in the Andean countryside and cities.

Example of encarnado sculpture: The technique of *encarnado*, or the simulation of the color of human flesh, was used on sculptures to make them appear more realistic.

The Chilote School

The Chilote School of religious imagery is another artistic manifestation developed during the colonial period by Jesuit missionaries with the purpose of evangelizing. The works of this style or movement reflect the aesthetics of blending typical of other schools in the Americas from this era. Examples of this style include the combination of European, Latin American, and Indigenous features, as well as local flora, fauna, and landscape.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- plateresque. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/plateresque. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cusco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cusco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inca Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cusco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cusco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kingdom of Cuzco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Cuzco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prehistoric art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- antiquity. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/antiquity. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Machu Picchu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuscoinfobox. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuscoinfobox.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 450px-80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#/media/File:80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuzco1860. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuzco1860.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aztec clothing. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_clothing. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inca society. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_society. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prehistoric art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chimu00fa culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chim%C3%BA_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chimu00fa culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chim%C3%BA_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- cochineal. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cochineal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tunic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tunic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vicuna. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/vicuna. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuscoinfobox. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuscoinfobox.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 450px-80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#/media/File:80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuzco1860. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuzco1860.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tupa-inca-tunic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tupa-inca-tunic.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Inca Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inca society. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_society. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inca society. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_society. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Inca. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Inca. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- metallurgist. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/metallurgist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuscoinfobox. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuscoinfobox.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 450px-80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#/media/File:80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuzco1860. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuzco1860.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tupa-inca-tunic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tupa-inca-tunic.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andean Bronze Age Bottle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Andean_Bronze_Age_Bottle.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lombards Museum 198. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lombards_Museum_198.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Amerindian Civilizations: Civilizations in America: Pre-Columbian Era. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/HIST221-1.3.1-Amerindian-Civilizations-FINAL.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Inca Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Inca_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_conquest_of_the_Inca_Empire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Prehistoric art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- irrevocably. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/irrevocably. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spanish Art in the Americas. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/users/307859/textbooks/painting-1-8adf00aa-c11d-45a0-864a-1de2e11ad1f5/europe-and-america-in-the-1700s-and-early-1800s-11/spainish-art-111/spanish-art-in-the-americas-459-5782/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architecture of the Inca. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/textbooks/boundless-art-history-textbook/the-americas-after-1300-ce-31/the-incas-193/architecture-of-the-inca-699-7703/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuscoinfobox. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuscoinfobox.png. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 450px-80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu#/media/File:80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Juin_2009_-_edit.2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cuzco1860. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cuzco1860.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tupa-inca-tunic. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tupa-inca-tunic.png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andean Bronze Age Bottle. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Andean_Bronze_Age_Bottle.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Lombards Museum 198. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lombards_Museum_198.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quenha-do-s-c3-a9culo-xvii.%402x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: figures.boundless-cdn.com/16046/full/quenha-do-s-c3-a9culo-xvii.%402x.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The execution of Inca. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_execution_of_Inca.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- e-la-sangre-paso-encarnado.%402x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cristo_de_la_Sangre_Paso_Encarnado.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 25.3: The Incas is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

25.4: North America

Beadwork and Ceramics in the Eastern Woodland Cultures

The Eastern Woodland cultures lived east of the Mississippi River and are best known for their beadwork and pottery.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Northeastern and Southeastern Woodland cultures

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Eastern Woodland cultures inhabited the regions of North America east of the Mississippi River. Much of their artwork was preserved in the earthen mounds where they buried their dead.
- Beadwork, pendants, and wood carvings were common among the tribes of the Northeastern Woodlands.
- The art of the Mississippian culture from 800–1500 CE included advanced pottery techniques, patchwork clothing, and wood carving and painting. The culture flourished throughout the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex.
- Fort Ancient culture flourished along the Ohio River from 1000 CE–1750 CE and included coiled pottery, beadwork, and silversmithing.

Key Terms

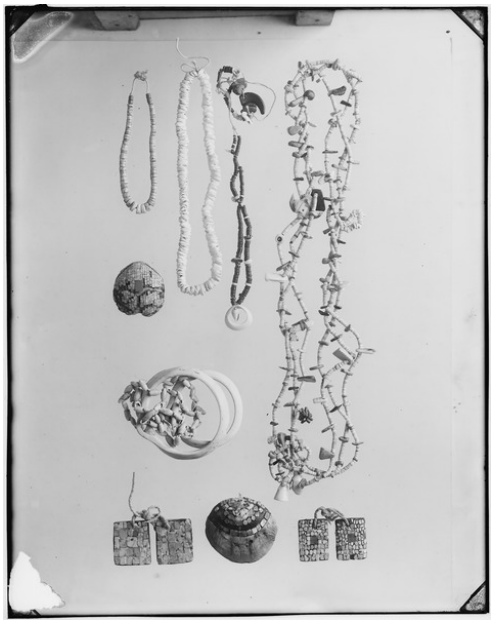
- **effigy**: A likeness of a person.
- **gorget**: An ornament for the neck; a necklace, ornamental collar, torque etc.
- **discoidal**: Having the flat, circular shape of a disc or a quoit.

Overview: The Eastern Woodland Cultures

The Eastern Woodland cultures inhabited the regions of North America east of the Mississippi River as of 2500 BCE or earlier. Much of their artwork has been preserved through their shared tradition of burying their dead in earthen mounds along with artifacts and tools.

Northeastern Woodlands

From the 12th century onward, the Iroquois and nearby coastal tribes fashioned *wampum* from shells and string. Wampum is a Wampanoag word referring to the shells themselves, which were used primarily as currency and were highly sought as a trade good throughout the Eastern Woodlands.



Wampum jewelry: Wampum was commonly traded or used as currency by the Iroquois and nearby coastal tribes.

Beadwork was very popular in this region, and Indigenous peoples produced barrel-shaped and discoidal shell beads, as well as perforated small whole shells. Over time, the use of more slender iron drills greatly improved the drilling of holes in small beads. Pendants carved from stone, wood, shells, and incised animal teeth—especially bear teeth—were popular and were typically shaped as animals such as birds, turtles, or fish. Bird motifs were especially common—ranging from the stylized heads of raptors to ducks—as were images of human faces, believed by the Seneca and other tribes to be protective. Pearls were historically inlaid into bear teeth and incorporated into necklaces.

Other arts from the Northeast Woodlands included wood carvings, such as *False Face* masks used by Iroquois people in healing rituals. Iroquois artists carved ornamental hair combs from antlers, making increasingly elaborate designs with the introduction of metal knives from Europe in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Europeans also introduced silversmithing to the northeast in the mid-17th century, and today there are several active Iroquois silversmiths.

Southeastern Woodlands

Mississippian Culture

The Mississippian culture flourished from approximately 800–1500 CE in what is now the Midwestern, Eastern, and Southeastern United States. Pottery is one of the hallmark arts of this culture, which includes the Cahokia, Natchez, Caddo, Choctaw, Muscogee Creek, Wichita, and many other southeastern peoples. One of the defining marks of Mississippian culture pottery is its use of more advanced ceramic techniques, such as the use of ground mussel shell as a tempering agent in the clay paste. Textile making (such as the common patchwork clothing worn by indigenous people) and doll-making were also common crafts.

Mississippi pottery: A human head effigy pot from the Mississippian culture, on display at the Hampson Museum State Park in Wilson.

Many artisans from this area were involved with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, a pan-regional and pan-linguistic religious and trade network. The majority of the information known about the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex is derived from the elaborate artworks its participants left behind, including pottery, shell gorgets and cups, stone statuaries, and copper plates. With the invasion of the Europeans and the diseases they introduced, many of the societies collapsed and ceased to practice a Mississippian lifestyle.

Cherokee shell gorget: A contemporary shell gorget carved by Bennie Pokemire (Eastern Band Cherokee).

In 1896, more than 1,000 carved and painted wooden objects—including masks, tablets, plaques, and effigies —were excavated in Key Marco, southwestern Florida. They have since been described as some of the finest prehistoric Native American art in North America. Spanish missionaries described similar masks and effigies in use by the Calusa late in the 17th century, although no examples of the Calusa objects from the historic period have survived.

Fort Ancient Culture

In addition to Mississippi culture, Fort Ancient was a Native American culture that flourished from 1000–1750 CE among a people who predominantly inhabited land along the Ohio River. Fort Ancient women used a technique known as coiling to make their pottery, in which they rolled clay into long, rounded strips. They then layered these strips one on top of another to mold the vessel, smoothing the inside of the vessel with a smooth round stone and the outside with a wooden paddle. Pottery from this period was distinguished by thinner walls than preceding Woodland pottery, and common shapes included large plain cooking jars with straps or loop handles. Fort Ancient pottery was often engraved with decorations on the rim and neck of the vessels, consisting of a series of interlocking lines, called *guilloché*.

Traditional dress often incorporated elaborate designs and decorations. For example, Choctaw women's dance regalia incorporated ornamental silver combs and openwork beaded collars, and Caddo women wore hourglass-shaped hair ornaments called *dush-tohs*.

Clay, stone, and pearl beads were fashioned and worn by the people of the Southeastern Woodlands, often decorated with bold imagery. As in the North, European contact introduced glass beads and silversmithing technology, and silver and brass armbands and gorgets became popular among Southeastern men in the 18th and 19th centuries. Sequoyah became one of the first well-known Cherokee silversmiths in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Arts of the Great Plains

Great Plains Native Americans are well known for their buffalo hide paintings, quillwork, and elaborate beadwork.

Learning Objectives

Examine the influence of European contact on buffalo hide painting, beadwork, metalsmithing, and other kinds of Great Plains art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The people of the Great Plains are the indigenous peoples who live on the plains and rolling hills of the Great Plains of North America.
- Buffalo hide clothing of these tribes was beautiful and elaborate, decorated with porcupine quill embroidery, beads, shells, and teeth.
- Buffalo hide paintings—and its later counterpart, Ledger Art—illustrated narratives, pictorial designs, calendars, and geometric designs.
- Great Plains Native Americans are perhaps most well known for their beadwork, used to decorate clothing, jewelry, breastplates, and ceremonial headdresses.

Key Terms

- **pictographic**: Represented by illustrations.
- **nomadic**: Leading a wandering life with no fixed abode; peripatetic, itinerant.
- **quillwork**: Decorative textile embellishment made from porcupine quills by certain Native Americans.

Overview: The Great Plains Cultures

The people of the Great Plains are the indigenous peoples who live on the plains and rolling hills of the Great Plains of North America. During the Plains Village period (ca. 950–1850 CE), tribes included nomadic peoples, such as the Blackfoot, Arapaho, Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Comanche, Crow, Gros Ventre, Kiowa, Lakota Sioux, Lipan, Plains Apache (or Kiowa Apache), Plains Cree, Plains Ojibwe, Sarsi, Nakoda (Stoney), and Tonkawa. Tribes also included the semi-sedentary tribes of the Arikara, Hidatsa, Iowa, Kaw (or Kansa), Kitsai, Mandan, Missouria, Omaha, Osage, Otoe, Pawnee, Ponca, Quapaw, Wichita, and the Santee, Yanktonai, and Yankton Sioux.

Art of the Great Plains

Buffalo Hides

Buffalo hide has many uses in Great Plains art. Clothing made from buffalo hide was beautiful and elaborate, decorated with porcupine quill embroidery (using a traditional style known as porcupine quillwork), beads, and such prized materials as shells and elk teeth. Later, items such as coins and glass beads acquired from trading were incorporated into Plains art.

Traditional Sioux dress: Sioux dress with fully beaded yoke.

Painting on buffalo hides was a common practice as well. Men painted narrative, pictorial designs recording personal exploits or visions as well as pictographic historical calendars known as *Winter counts*. Women painted geometric designs on tanned robes and rawhide, which sometimes served as maps. During the Reservation Era of the late 19th century, buffalo herds were systematically destroyed by European hunters. Due to the scarcity of hides, Plains artists adopted new painting surfaces, such as muslin or paper, giving birth to Ledger Art. Ledger Art flourished from the 1860s to the 1920s and was named for the accounting ledger books that were a common source for paper for Plains Native Americans during the late 19th century.

Beadwork

Great Plains Native Americans are most well known for their beadwork, which dates back to 8800 BCE and was used to decorate chokers, breastplates, clothing, jewelry, and ceremonial headdresses worn by women and men. Shells, such as marginella and olivella shells, were traded from the Gulf of Mexico and the coasts of California to the Plains beginning in 100 CE, and mussel shell gorgets, dentalia, and abalone were prized trade items for jewelry. Bones provided material for beads as well, especially long, cylindrical beads called hair pipes. Porcupine quillwork was also used in creating bracelets, hatbands, belt buckles, headdresses, hair roaches, and hair clips.

Glass beads were first introduced to the Plains as early as 1700 and were used in decoration in a manner similar to quillwork, though they never fully replaced it. The Lakota, especially the members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in the Western Dakotas, became particularly adept at glass bead work. Several award-winning quillworkers are active in the art world today, such as Juanita Growing Thunder Fogarty (Assiniboine-Sioux).

Metalsmithing

Southern Plains Native Americans adopted metalsmithing in the 1820s, after metal jewelry was introduced through Spanish and Mexican metalsmiths and trade with tribes from other regions. Plains men began wearing metal pectorals and armbands, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, members of the Native American Church revealed their membership to others through pins with emblems of peyote buttons, water birds, and other religious symbols. Bruce Caesar (Sac and Fox-Pawnee) is one of the most prolific Southern Plains metalsmiths active today and was awarded the NEA's National Heritage Fellowship in 1998. U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne) is also an accomplished silversmith.

Woodcarving in the Northwest Coast Cultures

Art from the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast and Alaska is distinguished by its complex woodcarvings and its use of formline.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the effects of European contact on the art produced in the Northwest coast and Alaska

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Northwest Coast art refers to art created by the indigenous peoples of present-day Washington State, Oregon, British Columbia, and Alaska.
- Before the European invasion, the most common media used by artists of this region were wood, stone, and copper; since European contact, paper, canvas, glass, and precious metals also have been used.
- Totem poles, masks, and canoes are examples of the complex woodcarvings of the peoples of the Northwest.
- Totem poles are monumental sculptures carved on poles, posts, or pillars with symbols or figures that commemorate cultural beliefs, recount familiar legends or events, or identify clan lineages; they may also serve as functional architectural features.
- Northwest designs commonly included natural animals, legendary creatures, and abstract forms and shapes, and they were often used to decorate traditional household items.
- After the arrival of Europeans in the late 18th century, traditional production of Northwest Coast art dropped significantly due to population loss and cultural assimilation.

Key Terms

- **First Nation**: The indigenous peoples of any country or region.
- **formline**: A feature in the indigenous art of the Northwest Coast of North America, distinguished by the use of characteristic shapes referred to as ovoids, U forms, and S forms.
- **argillite**: A fine-grained sedimentary rock, intermediate between shale and slate, sometimes used as a building material.

Northwest Coast Art

Northwest Coast art is the term commonly applied to a style of art created primarily by artists from Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and other First Nations and Native American tribes along the Northwest Coast of North America, from pre-European invasion times up to the present. Art from this region is historically distinguished by complex woodcarvings and the use of formlines, or characteristic shapes referred to as ovoids, "U" forms, and "S" forms.

Woodcarvings

Before the European invasion, the most common media were wood (often Western red cedar), stone, and copper; since European contact, paper, canvas, glass, and precious metals have also been used. If paint was used to decorate an object, the most common colors were traditionally red and black, though yellow was often used as well, particularly among Kwakwaka'wakw artists. Woodcarving from this region is characterized by an extremely complex style. The most famous examples include Totem poles, Transformation masks, and canoes.

Totem Pole from the Northwest: Native American Totem Pole from Ketchikan, Alaska.

Totem Poles

Totem poles are monumental sculptures carved on poles, posts, or pillars with symbols or figures made from large trees (mostly western red cedar) by indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest coast. The word *totem* derives from the Algonquian (most likely Ojibwe) word *odoodem*, "his kinship group." The carvings may symbolize or commemorate cultural beliefs that recount familiar legends, clan lineages, or notable events. The poles may also serve as functional architectural features, welcome signs for village visitors, or mortuary vessels for the remains of deceased ancestors. Given the complexity and symbolic meanings of totem pole carvings, their placement and importance lies in the observer's knowledge and connection to the meanings of the figures.

Totem pole carvings were likely preceded by a long history of decorative carving, with stylistic features borrowed from smaller prototypes. Eighteenth century European invaders documented the existence of decorated interior and exterior house posts prior to 1800. United States governmental policies and practices of acculturation and assimilation sharply reduced totem pole production by the end of 19th century. Renewed interest from tourists, collectors, and scholars in the 1880s and 1890s helped document and

collect the remaining totem poles, but nearly all totem pole making had ceased by 1901. Twentieth century revivals of the craft, additional research, and continued support from the public have helped establish new interest in this regional artistic tradition.

Weaving and Other Art Forms

Chilkat weaving applied formline designs to their textiles. Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian have traditionally produced Chilkat woven regalia from wool and yellow cedar bark, using them for civic and ceremonial events.

Chilkat blanket: In the collection of the University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks.

The patterns depicted in most forms of art include natural forms, such as bears, ravens, eagles, orcas, and humans; legendary creatures, such as thunderbirds and sisiutls; and abstract forms made up of the characteristic Northwest Coast shapes. Northwest Coast designs were often used to decorate traditional household items, such as spoons, ladles, baskets, hats, and paddles; following European contact, the Northwest Coast art style has increasingly been used in gallery-oriented forms, such as paintings, prints, and sculptures.

Impact of Europeans

After the European invasion in the late 18th century, the people who produced Northwest Coast art suffered huge population losses due to diseases, such as smallpox, and cultural losses due to assimilation into European-North American culture. The production of their art dropped off drastically as well. Toward the end of the 19th century, Northwest Coast artists began producing work for commercial sale, such as small argillite carvings. The end of the 19th century also saw a large-scale export of totem poles, masks, and other traditional art objects from the region to museums and private collectors around the world. Some of this export was accompanied by financial compensation to people who had a right to sell the art, though a great deal was not.

In the early 20th century, very few First Nations artists in the Northwest Coast region were producing art. A tenuous link to older traditions remained in artists such as Charles Gladstone and Mungo Martin. The mid-20th century saw a revival of interest and production of Northwest Coast art due to the influence of artists and critics, such as Bill Reid, a grandson of Charles Gladstone. It also saw an increasing demand for the return of art objects that were illegally taken from First Nations communities—a demand that continues to the present day. Today, there are numerous art schools teaching formal Northwest Coast art of various styles, and there is a growing market for new art in this style.

Art and Architecture of the Southwest Cultures

The indigenous peoples of the Southwest created magnificent works of pottery, jewelry, painting, weaving, and architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the pottery and jewelry of the Ancestral Pueblo, the sandpainting and weaving of the Navajo, and the architecture of the Southwest region

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Anasazi, or Ancestral Pueblo, created grayware and black-on-white pottery, decorated with geometric designs or representations of people, animals, and birds.
- Pueblo jewelry was often inlaid with pieces of turquoise, stone, or shell, and the Navajo incorporated silversmithing into their jewelry-making after this practice was introduced by the Mexicans in the 1850s.
- Sandpainting, the art of pouring colored sand onto a surface, was an aspect of Navajo healing ceremonies.
- Navajos learned to weave on upright looms from Pueblos and wove blankets and rugs that were highly regarded around the region.
- The Ancient Pueblo culture is perhaps best known for the stone and adobe dwellings built along cliff walls, the most elaborate of which is Chaco Canyon in New Mexico.

Key Terms

- **adobe**: An unburnt brick dried in the sun; a house made of unburnt brick dried in the sun.
- **lapidary**: An artist or artisan who forms stone, minerals, or gemstones into decorative items such as engraved gems, including cameos and faceted designs; the primary techniques employed are cutting, grinding, and polishing.
- **cabochon**: A gemstone that has been shaped and polished as opposed to faceted.
- **inlay**: To place pieces of a foreign material within another material to form a decorative design.
- **lignite**: A low-grade, brownish-black coal.
- **Utilitarian**: Practical and functional, not just for show.

Overview: The Art of the Southwest

Prior to the European invasion of North America, the region of the Southwest was dominated by the Pueblo, Navajo, Apache, Hopi, and Zuni peoples, among others. These peoples were rich in culture and history, creating magnificent works of pottery, jewelry, painting, weaving, and architecture. The Anasazi, or Ancestral Pueblo (1000 BCE–700 CE), are the ancestors of today's Pueblo tribes. Their culture formed in the American southwest, after the cultivation of corn was introduced from Mexico around 1200 BCE. People of this region developed an agrarian lifestyle, cultivating food, storage gourds, and cotton with irrigation or xeriscaping techniques. They lived in sedentary towns, so pottery, used to store water and grain, was ubiquitous.

Pottery

For hundreds of years, the Pueblo created utilitarian grayware and black-on-white pottery, incorporating reds and oranges toward the end of their era in the 13th century. Designs were painted on the exterior of black-on-white pottery and the interior of bowls, primarily with geometric shapes or representations of people, animals, and birds. Pottery making became an art form for individuals who specialized in distinctive styles made for trade. The Hopi were known for creating *ollas*, dough bowls, and food bowls of different sizes for daily use; they also made more elaborate ceremonial mugs, jugs, ladles, seed jars, and vessels for ritual use. These finer works were usually finished with polished surfaces and decorated with black painted designs.

Pottery of the Pueblo: Ceramic bowl with painted geometric shapes on the inside, from Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, Pueblo III phase.

Jewelry and Silversmithing

Jewelry and other ornaments were made by the Pueblo using shells and stones bartered from the coasts of Mexico and California. Within the region, turquoise, soapstone, and lignite were attained through trade. Just as pottery from this period has received world-wide recognition, work inlaid with shell and turquoise from this period was noteworthy for its artistry and sophisticated inlay techniques.

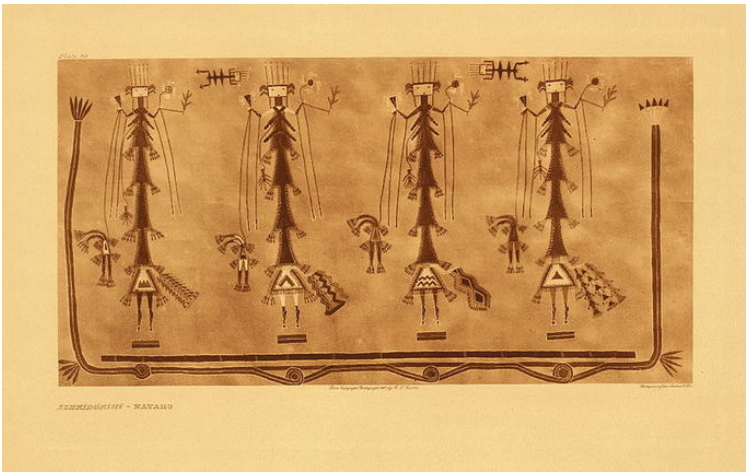
Old and new turquoise Navajo bracelets: The Navajo are well-known today for their use of turquoise in jewelry.

In the 1850s, the Navajos adopted silversmithing from the Mexicans. Atsidi Sani (Old Smith) was the first Navajo silversmith, and the technology quickly spread to surrounding tribes. Today, thousands of artists produce silver jewelry using turquoise. Their hallmark jewelry piece known as the squash blossom necklace first appeared in the 1880s; while turquoise had been part of jewelry for centuries, Navajo artists did not use inlay techniques to insert turquoise into silver designs until the late 19th century. Sikyatata became the first Hopi silversmith in 1898, and Hopi are renowned for their overlay silver work and cottonwood carvings. Zuni artists are admired for their cluster work jewelry showcasing turquoise designs, as well as for their elaborate, pictorial stone inlay in silver.

The centuries-old art of lapidary, preserved by clan and family tradition, remains an important element of design. These works of art are commonly decorated with stone on stone mosaic inlay, channel inlay, cluster work, petite point, needle point, and natural cut or smoothed and polished cabochons fashioned from shells, coral, semi-precious gems, and precious gems; as with other art forms, blue or green turquoise is the most common and recognizable material used.

Navajo Sandpainting

Sandpainting is an aspect of Navajo healing ceremonies that inspired an art form. It involves the pouring of colored sands, powdered pigments from minerals or crystals, and pigments from other natural or synthetic sources onto a surface to make a fixed or unfixed kind of painting. In the sandpainting of southwestern Navajo, the Medicine Man (or *Hatałii*) paints loosely upon the ground of a *hogan*, where the ceremony takes place, or on a buckskin or cloth tarpaulin, by letting the colored sands flow through his fingers. The colors for the painting are usually accomplished with naturally colored sand, crushed gypsum (white), yellow ochre, red sandstone, charcoal, and a mixture of charcoal and gypsum (blue). Brown can be made by mixing red and black; red and white make pink. Other coloring agents include corn meal, flower pollen, or powdered roots and bark.



Navajo sandpainting: One of the four elaborate dry-paintings or sand altars employed in the rites of the Mountain Chant, a Navaho medicine ceremony of nine days' duration.

Weaving

Navajos came to the southwest with their own weaving traditions; however they learned to weave on upright looms from Pueblos and wove blankets that were eagerly collected by Great Basin and Plains tribes in the 18th and 19th centuries. After the introduction of the railroad in the 1880s, imported blankets became plentiful and inexpensive, so Navajo weavers switched to producing rugs for trade for an increasingly non-Native audience. Rail service also brought in Germantown wool from Philadelphia, a kind of commercially dyed wool, which greatly expanded the weavers' color palettes. Some early European-American invaders moved in and set up trading posts, often buying Navajo rugs by the pound and selling them back east by the bale.

Architecture

The Anasazi culture is perhaps best known for the stone and adobe dwellings built along cliff walls, particularly during the Pueblo II (900–1150 CE) and Pueblo III (1150–1350 CE) eras. Adobe structures are constructed with bricks created from sand, clay, and water, with some fibrous or organic material; they were then shaped using frames and dried in the sun. These villages, called pueblos by Spanish settlers, were often only accessible by rope or rock climbing. One of the most elaborate and largest ancient settlements is Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, which includes 15 major complexes of sandstone and timber connected by a network of roads.

In the Southwestern United States, numerous pictographs and petroglyphs were created. The creations of the Fremont culture, the Anasazi, and later tribes can be seen at present day Buckhorn Draw Pictograph Panel and Horseshoe Canyon, among other sites. Petroglyphs by these and the Mogollon culture's artists are represented in Dinosaur National Monument and at Newspaper Rock.
CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Mississippian culture pottery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippian_culture_pottery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ceramics of indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceramics_of_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23Eastern_Woodlands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fort Ancient. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Ancient%23Ceramics. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native American jewelry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_jewelry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native Americans in the United States. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States%23Society_and_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23Eastern_Woodlands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- discoidal. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/discoidal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- gorget. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gorget. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- effigies. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/effigies. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bennie pokemire gorget. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bennie_pokemire_gorget.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hampson effigypot HRoe 2006. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hampson_effigypot_HRoe_2006.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wampum jewelry - NARA - 523576.tif. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wampum_jewelry_-_NARA_-_523576.tif. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ledger art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ledger_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Plains Indians. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Plains_Indians. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23The_West. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native American jewelry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_jewelry%23Great_Plains. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quillwork. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quillwork. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- nomadic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nomadic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pictographic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pictographic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bennie pokemire gorget. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bennie_pokemire_gorget.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hampson effigypot HRoe 2006. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hampson_effigypot_HRoe_2006.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wampum jewelry - NARA - 523576.tif. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wampum_jewelry_-_NARA_-_523576.tif. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sioux-Womendress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sioux-Womendress.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Northwest Coast art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Coast_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native American jewelry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_jewelry%23Northwest_Coast. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas%23Northwest_Coast. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- argillite. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/argillite. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- First Nation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/First_Nation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Totem pole. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Totem_pole. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bennie pokemire gorget. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bennie_pokemire_gorget.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hampson effigypot HRoe 2006. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hampson_effigypot_HRoe_2006.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wampum jewelry - NARA - 523576.tif. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wampum_jewelry_-_NARA_-_523576.tif. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sioux-Womendress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sioux-Womendress.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chilkat blanket univ alaska museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chilkat_blanket_univ_alaska_museum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ketchican totem pole 2 stub. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ketchican_totem_pole_2_stub.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//management/definition/utilitarian. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native American jewelry. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_jewelry%23Southwest. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ancestral Pueblo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancestral_Pueblo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native Americans in the United States. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States%23Society_and_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pueblo III Era. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pueblo_III_Era. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sandpainting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandpainting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Native American art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_art%23Southwest. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Navajo people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Navajo_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- adobe. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/adobe. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lignite. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lignite. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- inlay. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/inlay. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bennie pokemire gorget. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bennie_pokemire_gorget.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hampson effigypot HRoe 2006. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hampson_effigypot_HRoe_2006.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wampum jewelry - NARA - 523576.tif. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wampum_jewelry_-_NARA_-_523576.tif. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sioux-Womendress. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sioux-Womendress.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chilkat blanket univ alaska museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chilkat_blanket_univ_alaska_museum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Ketchican totem pole 2 stub. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ketchican_totem_pole_2_stub.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Navajo sandpainting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Navajo_sandpainting.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 080. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:080.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bowl Chaco Culture NM USA. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bowl_Chaco_Culture_NM_USA.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 25.4: North America is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

26: Oceania

26.1: The Rise of Pacific Cultures
26.2: Australia
26.3: Wood Carving in Oceania
26.4: Polynesia
26.5: Art of New Zealand
26.6: Hawaiian Art
26.7: Modern Oceanic Art

This page titled 26: Oceania is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.1: The Rise of Pacific Cultures

The Rise of Pacific Cultures

The ancestors of modern-day Pacific Cultures came to the regions of Polynesia, Micronesia, Australia, and Melanesia in two distinct waves, from 38,000 BCE to 1500 BCE.

Learning Objectives

Outline the history and geography of Oceania

Key Takeaways

Key Points

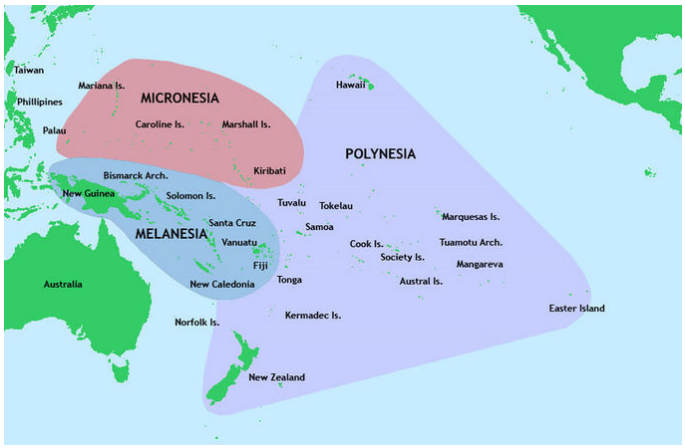
- Oceania encompasses the people indigenous to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. The area is often broken down into four separate regions: Polynesia, Micronesia, Australia, and Melanesia.
- The ancestors of the people of these islands came from Southeast Asia by two different groups: the first came to New Guinea and Australia by 38,000 BCE, while the second came 30,000 years later and expanded into further remote islands. The Lapita, dating from about 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, are thought to be the ancestors of the modern day cultures of Polynesia, Micronesia, and some parts of Melanesia.
- The Lapita culture was formed by the second wave of Oceanic settlers coming from Southeast Asia.
- The period from 1000 BCE to 1000 CE is characterized by increasing trade and interaction between the Pacific Islands and mainland Asia, as well as the settling of new areas.
- By 1500 E, the first European explorers reached Oceania. Although previous artistic and architectural traditions continued, the various regions began to diverge and record more distinct cultures.

Key Terms

- **moai**: Monolithic human figures carved by the Rapa Nui people from rock on the Chilean Polynesian island of Easter Island between the years 1250 and 1500.
- **Lapita**: A term applied to an ancient Pacific Ocean archaeological culture that is believed by many archaeologists to be the common ancestor of several cultures in Polynesia, Micronesia, and some coastal areas of Melanesia.

Introduction: Oceania

Art of Oceania properly encompasses the artistic traditions of the people indigenous to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. The area is often broken down into four separate regions: Polynesia, Micronesia, Australia, and Melanesia. The ancestors of the people of these islands came from Southeast Asia by two different groups at separate times. The first, an Australoid people and the ancestors of modern day Melanesians and Australian Aboriginals, came to New Guinea and Australia, with the Melanesians expanding as far as the northern Solomon Islands by 38,000 BCE. The second wave of people came from Southeast Asia 30,000 years later, where they reached further remote Pacific islands. These early people lacked a writing system and made works on perishable materials, so few records of them exist from this time.



Map of major culture areas of Oceania: Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia, and Australia: The four cultural areas of Oceania are illustrated on this map, including the land masses of Australia, New Guinea, and New Zealand and the numerous Pacific Islands.

By 1500 BCE, descendants of the second wave of settlers began to expand and spread into the more remote islands. At around the same time, art began to appear in New Guinea, including the earliest examples of sculpture in Oceania. From around 1000 BCE on, the Lapita people consolidated and began to create the contemporary Polynesian cultures of Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji. From there they ventured further out into the Pacific and settled the Marquesas and northern Cook Islands.

The Lapita

The Lapita were an early culture with an influential artistic tradition. Dating from about 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, they are thought to be the ancestors of the modern day cultures of Polynesia, Micronesia, and some parts of Melanesia. The culture was formed by the second wave of Oceanic settlers, and the name comes from the site of Lapita in New Caledonia, which was among the first places its distinctive sculpture would be found. Their art is best known by their ceramics, which include elaborate geometric motifs and sometimes anthropomorphic imagery. It is thought some of the designs may be related to modern Polynesian tattoos and barkcloths. The ceramics were created by firing a comblike tool that stamped the designs on to wet clay; each stamp would have one design and would be layered until an elaborate pattern was created. Their usage is believed to have been primarily practical, used in cooking, serving, and storing food.

Interaction with Mainland Asia

The period from 1000 BCE to 1000 CE is characterized by increasing trade and interaction between the Pacific Islands and mainland Asia. Starting around 600 BCE, works of the Dongson culture of Vietnam—known for their bronze working—can be found in Oceania, and their imagery has a strong influence on the indigenous artistic tradition. New areas were also settled during this time, including Hawaii, Easter Island, Tahiti, and New Zealand. Starting around 1100 CE, the people of Easter Island began construction of nearly 900 *moai* (large stone statues). At about 1200 CE, the people of Pohnpei, an island in Micronesia, embarked on another megalithic construction, building Nan Madol, a city of artificial islands and a system of canals. By 1500, the first European explorers reached Oceania. Although previous artistic and architectural traditions continued, the various regions began to diverge and record more distinct cultures.

Moai at Rano Raraku, Easter Island: Starting around 1100 CE, the people of Easter Island began construction of nearly 900 moai, or large stone statues of human-like heads.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceanic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lapita. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapita. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- moai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/moai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pacific Culture Areas. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pacific_Culture_Areas.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Moai Rano raraku. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Moai_Rano_raraku.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 26.1: The Rise of Pacific Cultures is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.2: Australia

Aboriginal Australian Art

Aboriginal Australian art can be traced back at least 30,000 years and is one of the longest continuously practiced artistic traditions in the world.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the periods and regional styles of Aboriginal Australian rock paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The history of visual arts in Australia ranges from ancient Aboriginal rock paintings to the western-influenced contemporary works of today.
- Rock paintings are divided into three periods based on the styles and content of the art: the Pre-Estuarine (c. 40,000–6000 BCE), Estuarine (c. 6000 BCE–500 CE), and Fresh Water (c. 500 CE–present) periods.
- There are three regional styles of cave art: the geometric style (known for its concentric circles, arcs, and dots), the simple figurative style, and the complex figurative style.
- Rock paintings are believed to have served several functions, from ceremonial to merely decorative. Today, they are preserved and protected in national parks throughout the continent.
- The influence of Aboriginal artwork in Australia carries over to the 19th and 20th centuries in the works of many artists, as well as in the resurgence of Aboriginal art today.

Key Terms

- **advent**: Coming; coming to; approach; arrival.
- **indigenous**: Born or engendered in, native to a land or region, especially before an intrusion.
- **aboriginal**: First according to historical or scientific records; original; indigenous.

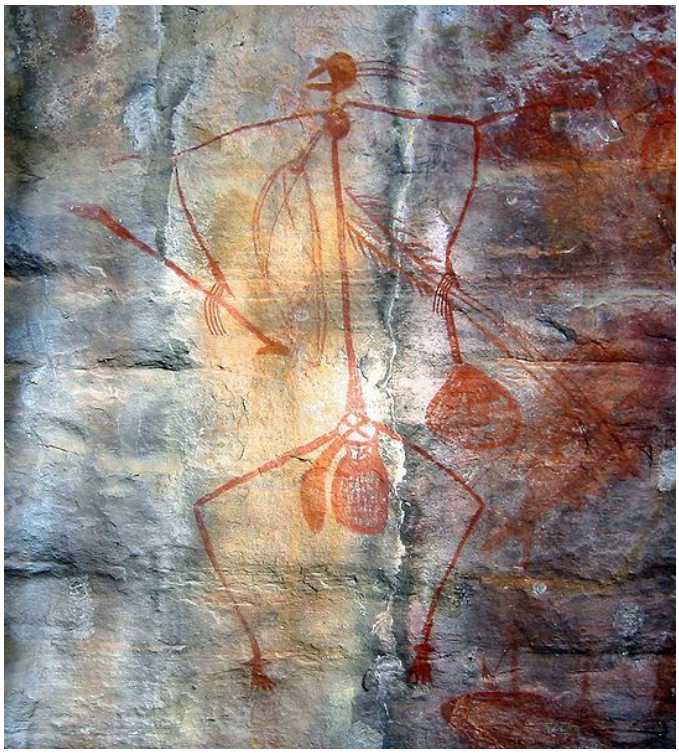
Aboriginal and Indigenous Art

The visual arts have a long history in Australia, from ancient Aboriginal rock paintings to colonial landscapes to contemporary movements of today. Aboriginal art in Australia can be traced back at least 30,000 years; the rock art of Australian Aborigines is one of the longest continuously practiced artistic traditions in the world.

Rock paintings are divided into three periods based on the styles and content of the art: the Pre-Estuarine Period (c. 40,000–6000 BCE), the Estuarine Period (c. 6000 BCE–500 CE), and the Fresh Water Period (c. 500 CE–present). There are also three regional styles of cave art:

- The geometric style (known for its concentric circles, arcs, and dots) found in Central Australia, Tasmania, the Kimberly, and Victoria;
- The simple figurative style found in Queensland; and
- The complex figurative style found in Arnhem Land.

Rock paintings are believed to have served several functions, from ceremonial to merely decorative. Today, they are preserved in national parks throughout the continent and protected through organizations such as the Friends of Australian Rock Art.



Aboriginal Rock Art, Ubirr Art Site, Kakadu National Park, Australia: Aboriginal art in Australia can be traced back at least 30,000 years.

Influence of Aboriginal Art Today

The influence of Aboriginal artwork in Australia carries over to the 19th and 20th centuries in the works of William Barak, who recorded traditional aboriginal ways for the education of Westerners: Margaret Preston, a non-indigenous painter incorporating Aboriginal influences in her works; Albert Namatjira, an Arrernte artist whose landscapes inspired the Hermannsburg School of art; and Elizabeth Durack, notable for her fusion of Western and indigenous influences.

In 1971, Geoffrey Bardon encouraged the Aboriginal people of Papunya to paint their *Dreamtime* stories about creation, people, animals, and customs on canvas. This led to the development of the Papunya Tula School, or *dot art*, now possibly Australia's most recognizable style of art worldwide. Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra, and William Sandy are some of the best known Papunya artists. Other Aboriginal artists have incorporated western mediums into their work, such as Emily Kngwarreye, Rover Thomas, and Freddy Timms.

Colonial Australian Art

European colonization had a profound and permanent affect on the artwork of Australia.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the impact colonialism had on Australian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Europeans first began depicting the natural landscape and wildlife of the Australian continent during initial voyages in the late 1700s.
- The colonial art market primarily desired landscape paintings, which are often described as making a gradual shift from a European sense of light to a more Australian one, as the lighting in Australia is notably different from that of Europe.
- The first artistic representations of the Australia scene by European artists were mainly natural history illustrations, depicting the distinctive flora and fauna of the land for scientific purposes and the topography of the coast.

- From 1851, the Victorian Gold Rush resulted in a huge influx of settlers and new wealth, and wealthy landowners and merchants recorded their material success by commissioning landscape paintings.
- The origin of distinctly Australian painting is associated with the Heidelberg School of the 1880s–1890s, which integrated an impressionistic *plein air* approach and idealized the rural landscape.

Key Terms

- **plein air**: A french term referring to the practice of painting outdoors, where a painter reproduces the actual visual conditions seen at the time of the painting.

Colonial Art (1770–1900)

The visual arts have a long history in Australia, from ancient Aboriginal rock paintings to colonial landscapes to contemporary movements of today. Europeans depicted the natural landscape, plant life, and wildlife of the Australian continent during initial voyages in the late 1700s. John Lewin and Harriet and Helena Scott were among the first professional natural history illustrators, while artists such as Augustus Earle focused on ethnographic portraiture of Aboriginal Australians.

The colonial art market primarily desired landscape paintings, which are often described as making a gradual shift from a European sense of light to a more Australian one. The lighting in Australia is notably different from that of Europe, and early attempts at landscapes attempted to reflect this. The art of this era is also characterized by transformation, where artistic ideas originating from beyond (primarily Europe) gained new meaning and purpose when transplanted into the new continent and the emerging colonial society.

Early Colonial Art (1770–1850)

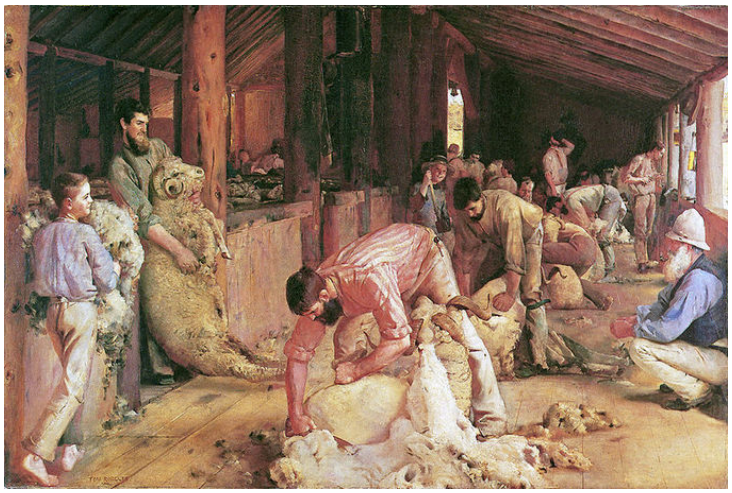
The first artistic representations of the Australia scene by European artists were mainly natural history illustrations, depicting the distinctive flora and fauna of the land for scientific purposes and the topography of the coast. Sydney Parkinson, the Botanical illustrator on James Cook's 1770 voyage that first charted the eastern coastline of Australia, made a large number of such drawings under the direction of naturalist Joseph Banks. Until the turn of the century, all drawings made in the colony were crafted by soldiers, including British naval officers George Raper and John Hunter, and convict artists, including Thomas Watling. Most are in the style of naval draughtsmanship and cover natural history topics, specifically birds, while a few depict the infant colony itself.

Later Colonial Art (1850–1895)

From 1851, the Victorian Gold Rush resulted in a huge influx of settlers and new wealth. S. T. Gill (1818–1880) documented life on the Australian gold fields; however the colonial art market primarily desired landscape paintings, which were commissioned by wealthy landowners or merchants wanting to record their material success. Some of the artists of note included Eugene von Guerard, Nicholas Chevalier, William Strutt, John Skinner Prout, and Knut Bull. Louis Buvelot was a key figure in landscape painting, illustrating a more domesticated and settled view of the land. Among the first Australian artists to gain a reputation overseas were the impressionist John Peter Russell and landscape painter Rupert Bunny.

The Heidelberg School (1885–1910)

The origin of distinctly Australian painting is associated with the Heidelberg School of the 1880s–1890s. Like European Impressionists, artists such as Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts, and Charles Conder applied themselves to recreating a truer sense of light and color as seen in the Australian landscape. They began an impressionistic *plein air* approach to the Australian landscape that remains embedded in Australia's popular consciousness, both inside and outside the art world.



Shearing the Rams, 1888–1890, oil on canvas by Tom Roberts: Colonial artists such as Tom Roberts (1856–1931) captured aspects of everyday life in Colonial Australia, such as this scene of men in a barn shearing rams.

Their most recognized paintings involve scenes of pastoral and outback Australia. Central themes of their art are considered those of work, conquering the land, and an idealization of the rural pioneer. By the 1890s, most Australians were city-dwellers, and a romantic view of pioneer life gave great power and popularity to images of the rural landscape.

Golden Summer, Eaglemont (1889) oil-on-canvas, by Arthur Streeton: Artists such as Arthur Streeton (1867–1943) attempted to capture the unique golden light and color that characterize the Australian landscape.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- advent. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/advent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceanic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of australia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_australia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dreamtime. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dreamtime. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Indigenous Australian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_Australian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aboriginal. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aboriginal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- indigenous. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/indigenous. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aboriginal Art Australia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aboriginal_Art_Australia.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Art of Australia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_australia. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aboriginal Art Australia. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aboriginal_Art_Australia.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- -roberts-shearing-the-rams.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tom_Roberts_-_Shearing_the_Rams.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- -eaglemont-arthur-streeton.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Golden_Summer_Eaglemont_Arthur_Streeton.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 26.2: Australia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.3: Wood Carving in Oceania

New Guinean Wood Carvings

With its diverse cultural heritage, the island of New Guinea holds some of the most striking art in all of Oceania.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ancient stone figures, famous wood carvings, and the work of contemporary artists of New Guinea

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The earliest examples of art in New Guinea are thought to have appeared around 1500 BCE in the form of early Oceanic rock sculptures, found mainly in the highlands.
- The region is most famously known today for its elaborate wood carvings, including sculptures, masks, canoes, drums, and storyboards.
- The Asmat, an ethnic group of New Guinea, are known for their elaborate wood carvings in the form of bisj poles, which are designed to honor ancestors.The latter half of the 19th century saw a decline of some traditional art forms as westernization began taking its toll on the area.
- However, the 20th and 21st centuries have seen a comeback in traditional New Guinean art and a burgeoning movement of contemporary artists such as Mathias Kauage.

Key Terms

- **highlands**: A mountainous or hilly section of a country.
- **oceanic art**: The artistic traditions of the people indigenous to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.
- **headhunting**: The practice of taking and preserving a person's head after killing the person.

Overview: Art in New Guinea

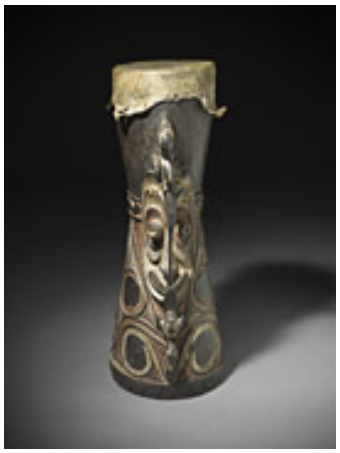
New Guinean art is many-sided and complex. The sheer diversity of cultural groups existing in the region have resulted in many unique styles of cultural expression, from art and architecture to music and weaponry.

Ancient Sculptures

Traditional art of New Guinea falls under the greater classification of Oceanic art —art made by the native peoples of the Pacific Islands and Australia. The earliest examples of art in New Guinea are thought to have appeared around 1500 BCE in the form of early Oceanic sculptures. These sculptures, found throughout the island but mostly in the mountainous highlands, first appeared as stone figures that took the shape of mortars, pestles, or freestanding figures. Imagery including birds, human heads, or geometric patterns were often carved onto the tops of pestles or mortars or into the freestanding figures. While the original significance of these pieces is unknown, they may have been used in the context of rituals.

Wood Carvings

The region of New Guinea is perhaps most famously known for its tradition in wood carvings, which are especially prevalent along the Sepik River of Papau New Guinea (an Oceanian country that occupies the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and its offshore islands in Melanesia). Elaborate carvings often took the form of sculptures, masks, canoes, drums, and storyboards, many of which are in overseas museums today.

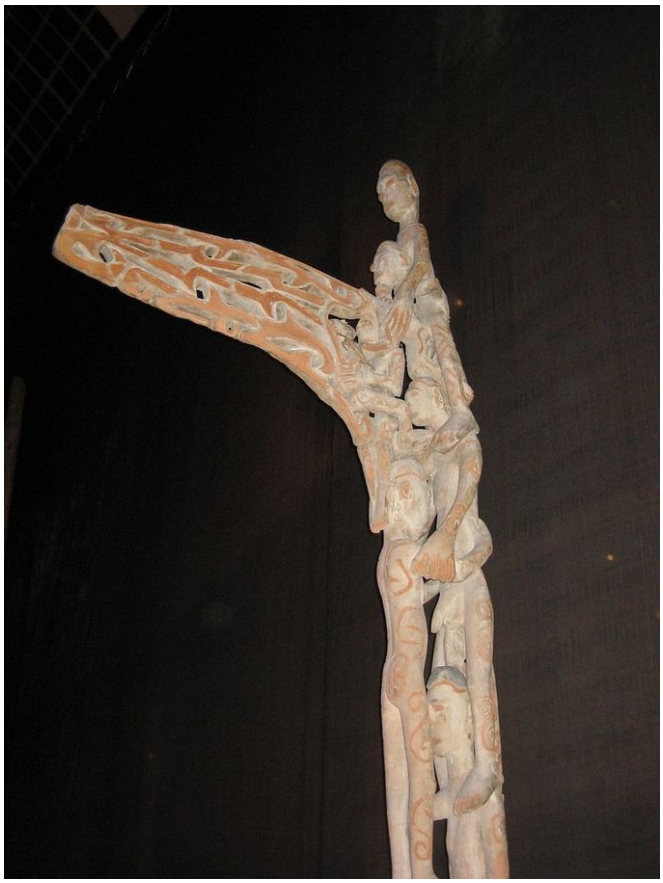


Hand drum, Papau New Guinea: Papua New Guinea, East Sepik Province, Eastern Iatmul People, circa 1909.

The Bisj Poles of the Asmat

The Asmat are an ethnic group of New Guinea, residing in the Papua province. They have one of the most well-known woodcarving traditions in the Pacific, and their art is sought by collectors worldwide. Asmat art consists of elaborate stylized wood carvings, such as the bisj pole, that are designed to honor ancestors.

A bisj pole is a ritual artifact that can be erected as an act of revenge, to pay homage to the ancestors, to calm the spirits of the deceased, and to bring harmony and spiritual strength to the community. Carved out of a single piece of a wild nutmeg tree, bisj poles can reach heights of up to 25 feet. Their carvings depict human figures standing on top of each other, as well as animal figures and carvings in the shape of a canoe prow. Bisj poles are carved by Asmat religious carvers (known as *wow-ipits*) after a member of their tribe or community had been killed by an enemy tribe. The Asmat believed that if a member of the community had been killed, his spirit would linger in the village and cause disharmony. Bisj poles were erected in order to satisfy these spirits and send them to the afterlife (known as *Safan*) across the sea.



A bisj pole of the Asmat: Carved out of a single piece of a wild nutmeg tree, bisj pole carvings depict human figures standing on top of each other, as well as animal figures and carvings in the shape of a canoe prow.

Many rituals involved the bisj poles, including dancing, masquerading, singing, and headhunting —all performed by men. Bisj poles often had a receptacle at the base that was meant to hold the heads of enemies taken on headhunting missions. Canoe prow symbols represented a metaphorical boat that would take the deceased spirits away to the afterlife; the human figures would represent deceased ancestors. Although the practice of headhunting ended in the Asmat region in the 1970s, the poles are still used in rituals today.

Papau New Guinean wooden sculpture: A Papua New Guinean wooden sculpture seen from multiple angles, Stanford University New Guinea sculpture garden.

Development of Art Over Time

New Guinean artistic tradition continued even with increasing trade and interaction with European explorers through the 17th and 18th centuries. The latter half of the 19th century saw a decline of some traditional art forms as westernization began taking its toll on the area. In the 20th century, however, New Guinean and other Oceanic art began making a comeback.

The first wave of contemporary New Guinean artists included Mathias Kauage,Timothy Akis, Jakupa Ako, and Joe Nalo. Kauage, whose work included drawing, painting, and woodcuts, won Australia's Blake Prize for religious art; four of his works are in the Glasgow Museum of Modern Art, and he had a solo show in 2005 at the Horniman Museum entitled "Kauage's Visions: Art from Papua New Guinea." Other noted Papua New Guinean visual artists include Larry Santana, Martin Morububuna, and Heso Kiwi.

Malagan Carvings

New Ireland, a large island in Melanesia, is most known for its elaborate wooden carvings used in traditional rituals and ceremonies.

Learning Objectives

Describe the malagan carvings, tatanua masks, and kulap sculptures of New Ireland

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- New Ireland has a rich cultural history heavily influenced by Oceanic art.
- The most well-known art from this region includes malagan carvings, tatanua masks, and kulap sculptures used in traditional ceremonies, such as the funerary malagan ritual.
- Wooden malagan carvings were used during the rituals they are named after to honor the deceased; they are now world-famous and held in museums around the world.
- Tatanua masks, carved from wood and elaborately painted and decorated, are often worn by ceremonial dancers during malagan rituals.
- Kulap are small funerary sculptures believed to contain the soul of the deceased.

Key Terms

- **Oceanic art**: The artistic traditions of the people indigenous to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.
- **funerary**: Of or relating to a ceremony honoring the deceased.

Overview: New Ireland

New Ireland, a large island in Melanesia lying northeast of the island of New Britain, has a rich cultural history in the Oceanic arts. Art from this region was often highly decorative, portraying elaborate forms and often tied to themes of ancestry, hunting, or spiritual ceremonies. Some of the most well-known artworks of New Ireland are malagan carvings, tatanua masks, and kulap sculptures.

Malagan Carvings

Malagan ceremonies are the most large-scale and famous of the many events that take place within the region of New Ireland. These ceremonies are large, intricate cultural events that are often funerary in nature, held by the family of the deceased to communicate with deities and to honor those that have passed. They take place irregularly and typically take several days, requiring months or years of preparation. While a malagan ceremony is always held in the name of one or more people who have died in recent years, it is not at all a mortuary rite; many other interactions take place within the overall event, including announcements, repayment of debts, recognition of obligations, resolution of disputes, and many other customary activities.

Statues of the Deceased

Malagan carvings, now world-famous, are the wooden carvings that are created for use in these ceremonies to honor the deceased. Mannequins or statues representing the soul of the deceased are carved by local peoples to celebrate the dead person's characteristics. The deceased are remembered through the various depictions that are carved on the statues, each of which has a symbolic meaning. These carvings are elaborated with anthropomorphic symbols, which are thought to represent the link between the people of New Ireland, their creation, and the spiritual world to which they eventually pass on.

Malagan carvings, Papua New Guinea: Malagan wood carvings are created for use in malagan ceremonies.

Tatanua Masks

A tatanua is a type of traditional wooden mask worn by ceremonial dancers during the malagan ritual. These masks are normally carved from lime wood, decorated with sugar cane fibers and wool or other animal hair, and painted using chalk and natural dyes. The type with a high headdress is created using a cane framework that was then covered in bark, although later imported fabric was used as the covering. Besides the fabric, some masks also included imported optical brighteners, which made some nominally white areas slightly blue.

Collection of malagan masks from the Ethnological Museum of Berlin: Masks were commonly used by dancers during the malagan ceremony to honor the spirits of the deceased.

The masks are frequently identifiable by the pierced ear lobes and prominent mouth, which is normally carved as if the mouth is open. The masks can also be identified by the asymmetrical hair design: the mask is left bare of hair on one side to mimic how a New Ireland man would shave his head to show that he was in mourning.

Tatuana mask: The tatuana masks of New Ireland were traditionally used in malagan ceremonies.

Traditionally, these ceremonial carvings were burnt at the conclusion of the event; however, during the colonial era, significant quantities of malagan statues and masks were collected by European administrators and can now be seen in museums all over Europe. In modern times most are now retained, as the carving tradition is known only by a few. Contemporary masters of malagan form include Ben Sisia of Libba Village (northern New Ireland) and Edward Salle of Lava Village (Tatau, Tabar Islands, New Ireland). Many malagan carvings are in museums around the world today.

Kulap Sculptures

Kulap are small funerary sculptures produced in the Punam region of southern New Ireland. They were believed to contain the soul of the deceased person whom they were meant to represent, and they would be ritually smashed once the period of mourning was over. In more recent years, some have been sold in their intact forms to Westerners, particularly to German administrators. Kulap are carved from chalk limestone native to the region, and they are often painted; they are expressly produced by artisans from the Rossel Mountains.

The chalk limestone used for carving kulap is found in the river beds of the hilly Punam region of southern New Ireland. Carved kulap may sometimes be painted, and some of the figures are carved in stylized forms and painted in pure white color. The figurines generally depict the deceased in a sitting posture. Kulap were kept in small enclosures, and only specific people were allowed to handle such figures, as it was believed that the soul of the dead should be temporarily confined to these figures to prevent them from harming the village environment.

Kulap carvings: Kulap figurines, made of chalk or limestone, are currently preserved in many museums in Berlin, New York, Australia, and Africa.

Wood Carving in the Caroline Islands

The Caroline Islands boast a rich history of traditional art, including elaborate wood carvings, sculptures, textiles, and ornaments.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the art traditionally produced by men and women in the Caroline Islands

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Belonging to the region of Micronesia, the Caroline Islands have a rich history of Oceanic art.
- Among the most prominent works of the region is the now-ruined, megalithic, floating city of Nan Madol, which is often called the "Venice of the Pacific."
- Artwork in these communities was often gendered: men created elaborate wood carvings and sculptures, while women created textiles and ornaments.
- Dilukai are wooden figures of young women carved over the doorways of chiefs' houses in the Palauan archipelago to protect the villagers' health and crops and ward off evil spirits.
- While colonization threatened historical artistic traditions, independence from colonial powers has since allowed for a renewed interest in traditional arts, and a notable movement of contemporary art has begun to emerge in the region.

Key Terms

- **Oceanic art**: The artistic traditions of the people indigenous to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.
- **archipelago**: A group of islands.
- **Caroline minuscule**: A script developed as a calligraphic standard in Europe so that the Latin alphabet could be easily recognized by the literate class from one region to another.

Overview: The Caroline Islands

The Caroline Islands are a widely scattered archipelago of tiny islands in the western Pacific Ocean, to the north of New Guinea. Technically belonging to the region of Micronesia, these islands have a rich history of Oceanic art.

Nan Madol

Among the most prominent works of the region is the megalithic floating city of Nan Madol, which today lies in ruin off the eastern shore of the island of Pohnpei. Construction on the city started in 1200 CE and was still underway when European invaders began to arrive around the year 1600. Often called the “Venice of the Pacific,” Nan Madol was constructed in a lagoon and consists of a series of small, artificial islands linked by a network of canals.

Nan Madol was the ceremonial and political seat of the Saudeleur Dynasty, which united Pohnpei’s estimated 25,000 people until about 1628. Set apart between the main island of Pohnpei and Temwen Island, it was a scene of human activity as early as the first or second century CE. By the 8th or 9th century, islet construction had started, but the distinctive megalithic architecture was probably not begun until the 12th or early 13th century. Around the turn of the 19th century, the city underwent a decline, and it was abandoned altogether by the 1820s.

Today Nan Madol forms an archaeological district covering more than 18 km² and includes the stone architecture built up on a coral reef flat along the shore of Temwen Island, several other artificial islets, and the adjacent Pohnpei main island coastline. The site core with its stone walls encloses an area approximately 1.5 km long by 0.5 km wide and contains nearly 100 artificial islets—stone and coral fill platforms—bordered by tidal canals. Many islets were once occupied by the dwellings of priests, while some islets served a special purpose such as food preparation, canoe construction on Dapahu, or coconut oil preparation on Peinering. High walls surrounding tombs are located on Peinkitel, Karian, and Lemenkou, but the most prominent is the royal mortuary islet of Nandauwas, where walls 18–25 feet high surround a central tomb enclosure within the main courtyard.

Ruins of Nan Madol: Nan Madol is a ruined city adjacent to the eastern shore of the island of Pohnpei that was the capital of the Saudeleur Dynasty until about 1628.

Art of the Islands

During the 19th century, the Caroline Islands were divided up among the colonial powers, but art continued to thrive. This work was typically gendered in the communities. Men in the Caroline Islands created elaborate wood carvings, including stylized bowls, canoe ornaments, sculptured figures, ceremonial vessels, and richly decorated ceremonial houses. Women created textiles, ornaments, bracelets, and headbands. Stylistically, this art is streamlined with a practical simplicity but typically finished with a high standard of quality.

Dilukai

Dilukai are wooden figures of young women carved over the doorways of chiefs’ houses (known as *bai*) in the Palauan archipelago. They are typically shown with legs splayed, revealing a large, black, triangular pubic area with the hands resting on the thighs. These female figures were carved to protect the villagers’ health and crops and ward off evil spirits. They were traditionally created by ritual specialists according to strict rules, which, if broken, would result in the deaths of the carver and the chief. Female figures presenting their vulva can be found in many cultures, symbolizing fertility and (spiritual) rebirth and protecting from evil spirits. When Christian missionaries arrived in the region, they disapproved of the Dilukai and so changed the context, claiming that their purpose was to shame an immoral woman.

Dilukai from the Caroline Islands, Belau (Palau), 19th–early 20th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art: Dilukai are wooden figures of young women carved over the doorways of chiefs' houses (bai) to protect the villagers' health and crops and ward off evil spirits.

The Effects of Colonialism

During the first half of the 20th century, Western and Japanese imperialism began to affect the region. A number of historical artistic traditions simply ceased to be practiced, while others were maintained. By the second half of the century, however, when the Caroline Islands secured their independence from colonial forces, there was a resurgence of interest in traditional arts, and a new generation of artists began to learn these forms. Toward the end of the 20th century, a notable, regional movement of contemporary art had emerged throughout Micronesia, to which artists from the Caroline Islands contributed.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceanic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Papua New Guinean art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua_New_Guinean_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Papua New Guinea. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Papua_New_Guinea. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mathias Kauage. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathias_Kauage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/oceanic%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/highlands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Asmat People. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Asmat_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bisj pole. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisj_pole. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Page not found | LACMA Collections. **Provided by**: Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Located at**: collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=hiersearch;dtype=i;id=502097. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IMG 2777u201387 short. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2777%E2%80%9387_short.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Bisjpaal1.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisj_pole#/media/File:Bisjpaal1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kulap. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulap. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Malagan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Malagan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceanic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tatanua mask. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatanua_mask. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- funerary. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/funerary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/oceanic%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Page not found | LACMA Collections. **Provided by**: Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Located at**: collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=hiersearch;dtype=i;id=502097. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IMG 2777u201387 short. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2777%E2%80%9387_short.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Bisjpaal1.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisj_pole#/media/File:Bisjpaal1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 330px-Malanggan-Masken_Berlin-Dahlem.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Malagan#/media/File:Malanggan-Masken_Berlin-Dahlem.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 375px-Funerary_Figure_%28kulap%29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulap#/media/File:Funerary_Figure_(kulap).jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Malagan carvings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Malagan_carvings.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tatanua mask. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatanua_mask. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nan Madol. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nan_Madol. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceanic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caroline Islands. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_Islands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Caroline minuscule. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_minuscule. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- archipelago. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/archipelago. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- oceanic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/oceanic%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dilukai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dilukai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Page not found | LACMA Collections. **Provided by**: Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Located at**: collectionsonline.lacma.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=hiersearch;dtype=i;id=502097. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IMG 2777u201387 short. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2777%E2%80%9387_short.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Bisjpaal1.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisj_pole#/media/File:Bisjpaal1.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 330px-Malanggan-Masken_Berlin-Dahlem.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Malagan#/media/File:Malanggan-Masken_Berlin-Dahlem.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 375px-Funerary_Figure_%28kulap%29.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulap#/media/File:Funerary_Figure_(kulap).jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Malagan carvings. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Malagan_carvings.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Tatanua mask. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatanua_mask. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1024px-Nan_Madol_5.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nan_Madol#/media/File:Nan_Madol_5.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dilukai from the Caroline Islands, Belau (Palau), 19th-early 20th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dilukai_from_the_Caroline_Islands,_Belau_(Palau),_19th-early_20th_century,_Metropolitan_Museum_of_Art.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 26.3: Wood Carving in Oceania is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.4: Polynesia

Crafts in the Cook Islands

The Cook and Marquesas Islands, located in the South Pacific, are known for their woodcarving, weaving, quilts, and tattooing.

Learning Objectives

Outline the art and history of the peoples of the Cook and Marquesas Islands

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Cook Islands, composed of 15 small islands whose total land area is 92.7 square miles, are a parliamentary democracy in free association with New Zealand.
- Woodcarving, weaving, and tivaevae—the art of handmade Island scenery patchwork quilts—are well-known artistic traditions of the Cook Islands. The islands have also produced several internationally recognized contemporary artists.
- The Marquesas Islands are a group of volcanic islands in French Polynesia, an overseas collectivity of France in the southern Pacific Ocean. The first recorded settlers prior to 100 CE were Polynesians, most likely from Tonga and Samoa.
- The Marquesas have a long history of complex geometric tattooing, covering the whole bodies of both men and women.

Key Terms

- **tapa**: A kind of cloth prepared by the Polynesians from the inner bark of the paper mulberry; sometimes called also kapa.
- **adze**: A cutting tool that has a curved blade set at a right angle to the handle and is used in shaping wood.

Overview: The Cook Islands

The Cook Islands are a parliamentary democracy in the South Pacific Ocean in free association with New Zealand, composed of 15 small islands whose total land area is 92.7 square miles. Although Cook Islanders are citizens of New Zealand, they have the status of Cook Islands nationals, which is not given to other New Zealand citizens. The Cook Islands were first settled in the 6th century CE by Polynesian people who migrated from nearby Tahiti to the southeast. British navigator Captain James Cook arrived in 1773 and 1777 and named the islands the Hervey Islands; the name “Cook Islands,” in honor of Cook, appeared on a Russian naval chart published in the 1820s.

Woodcarving in the Cook Islands

Woodcarving is a common art form in the Cook Islands. The proximity of islands in the southern group helped produce a homogeneous style of carving; however, each island developed its own characteristics within this style. Rarotonga is known for its fisherman’s gods and staff-gods; Atiu for its wooden seats; Mitiaro, Ma’uke, and Atiu for mace and slab gods; and Mangaia for its ceremonial adzes. Mangaia is the source of many fine adzes carved in a distinctive, idiosyncratic style with the so-called double-k design, and it also produces food pounders carved from the heavy calcite found in its extensive limestone caves. Most of the original wood carvings were either taken by early European collectors or were burned in large numbers by European missionaries.

Cook Islands carved wood figure, British Museum: The Cook Islands were regarded for their fine wood carvings, many of which were taken or destroyed by European missionaries.

Craftwork in the Cook Islands

Today, carving is no longer the major art form with the same spiritual and cultural emphasis given to it by the Maori in New Zealand. However, there are continual efforts to interest young people in their heritage. The island Atiu, in particular, has a strong tradition of crafts both in carving and local fiber arts such as *tapa*. The outer islands produce traditional weaving of mats, basketware, and hats. Particularly fine examples of *rito hats* are worn by women to church, which are made from the uncurled immature fibre of the coconut palm. The Polynesian equivalent of Panama hats, they are highly valued and are keenly sought by Polynesian visitors from Tahiti. Often, they are decorated with hatbands made of minuscule pupu shells that are painted and stitched on by hand. Although pupu are found on other islands, the collection and use of them in decorative work has become a specialty of Mangaia. The weaving of *rito* is a specialty of the northern island of Penrhyn.

Weaving in the Cook Islands: Weaved hand fan with a carved figure handle.

Another popular art form in the Cook Islands is tivaevae—the art of handmade Island scenery patchwork quilts. Introduced by the wives of missionaries in the 19th century, the craft grew into a communal activity, which is probably one of the main reasons for its popularity. By custom, a tivaevae is not measured by monetary value nor production cost; its value is said to be reflected by the love and patience that the creator(s) have put into making a stunning work of art. Cook Islands women often described their tivaevae as being “something from the heart.”

Woman sewing a tivaevae, Rarotonga: Tivaevae, the art of handmade patchwork quilts, is not measured by monetary value or production cost, but rather is valued for the love and patience that the creator(s) have put into making a stunning work of art.

Contemporary Artists

The Cook Islands have produced internationally recognized contemporary artists, especially in the main island of Rarotonga. Artists include painter and photographer Mahiriki Tangaroa, sculptor Eruera (Ted) Nia (originally a filmmaker), master carver

Mike Tavioni, and community-project artist Ani O'Neil. Many of these artists have studied at university art schools in New Zealand and continue to enjoy close links with the New Zealand art scene.

Marquesas Islands

The Marquesas Islands are a group of volcanic islands in French Polynesia, an overseas collectivity of France in the southern Pacific Ocean. The Islands form one of the five administrative divisions of French Polynesia. In the history of the Marquesas Islands, the first recorded settlers were Polynesians, who, from archeological evidence, are believed to have arrived before 100 CE. Ethnological and linguistic evidence suggests that they likely arrived from the region of Tonga and Samoa. The islands were given their name by the Spanish explorer Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira, who reached them on 21 July 1595. Much of Polynesia, including the original settlers of Hawaii, Tahiti, Rapa Iti, and Easter Island, was settled by Marquesans who were believed to have departed from the Marquesas as a result of overpopulation and drought-related food shortages. Much of the rest of Polynesia was colonized by Marquesan descendants centered in Tahiti.

These islands share similar artistic traditions of other Pacific Islands, including the art of tattooing. The Marquesas have a long history of complex geometric tattooing, covering the whole bodies of both men and women. Today, Marquesan culture is a mélange created by the layering of the ancient Marquesan culture, with strong influences from the important Tahitian culture and the politically important French culture.

Stonework on Easter Island

Easter Island is famous for its monumental statues, called moai, created by the early Rapa Nui people.

Learning Objectives

Describe the structure and creation of the moai and ahu of Easter Island

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Easter Island is a Polynesian island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean, located at the southeasternmost point of the Polynesian Triangle.
- The Rapa Nui people had a Stone Age culture that made extensive use of several different types of local stone, including basalt, obsidian, red scoria, and tuff.
- The large stone statues, or moai, for which Easter Island is world-famous, were carved from 1100–1680 CE. A total of 887 monolithic stone statues have been inventoried.
- Ahu are stone platforms that often carried moai; of the 313 known ahu, Ahu Tongariki has the most and tallest moai.
- Easter Island has one of the richest collections of petroglyphs in all Polynesia, with over 4,000 petroglyphs cataloged.
- Tongorongo is an apparent script with glyphs that include pictographic and geometric shapes; the texts, which were incised in wood, have yet to be deciphered.

Key Terms

- **moai**: Monolithic human figures carved by the Rapa Nui people from rock on the Chilean Polynesian island of Easter Island between the years 1250 and 1500 CE.
- **ahu**: A stone platform that carried the moai statues of the Rapa Nui people of Easter Island.
- **boustrophedon**: Written from right-to-left and left-to-right on alternate lines.

Background: Easter Island

Easter Island is a Polynesian island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean, located at the southeasternmost point of the Polynesian Triangle. A special territory of Chile that was annexed in 1888, Easter Island is famous for its 887 extant monumental statues, called moai, created by the early Rapa Nui people. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with much of the island protected within Rapa Nui National Park. In recent times, the island has served as a warning of the cultural and environmental dangers of

exploitation. Ethnographers and archaeologists also blame diseases carried by European sailors and Peruvian slave raiding of the 1860s for devastating the local peoples.

Easter Island and the islands near South America.: This map shows Easter Island, a Polynesian island in the southeastern Pacific Ocean, at the southeasternmost point of the Polynesian Triangle.

Stone Work

The Rapa Nui people had a Stone Age culture that made extensive use of several different types of local stone, including basalt, obsidian, red scoria, and tuff. The large stone statues for which Easter Island is world-famous, known as moai, were carved from 1100–1680 CE. A total of 887 monolithic stone statues have been inventoried on the island and in museum collections so far. Although often identified as “Easter Island heads,” most of the statues have torsos and end at the top of the thighs, and a small number are complete with the figures kneeling on bent knees and their hands over their stomachs. Almost all moai (roughly 95%) were carved out of distinctive, compressed, and easily worked solidified volcanic ash or tuff found at a single site inside the extinct volcano Rano Raraku. The native islanders who carved them used only stone hand chisels; while many teams worked on different statues at the same time, a single moai took a team of five or six men approximately one year to complete. Each statue represented the deceased head of a lineage.

The Rapa Nui are also know for their construction of ahu, or stone platforms, many of which (approximately 125 of the 313 known ahu) carry moai. *Ahu Tongariki*, one kilometer from Rano Raraku, had the most and tallest moai of any of the ahu. These stone platforms evolved from the traditional Polynesian *marae*. In this context, ahu referred to a small structure sometimes covered with a thatched roof where sacred objects, including statues, were stored. The ahu were usually adjacent to the *marae*, or main central court where ceremonies took place. On Easter Island, both ahu and moai evolved to a much greater size. Ahu are found mostly on the coast, where they are distributed fairly evenly, except on the western slopes of Mount Terevaka and the Rano Kau and Poike headlands.

Ahu Tongariki near Rano Raraku: Ahu Tongariki is a 15-moai ahu that was excavated and restored in the 1990s.

One of the highest-quality examples of Easter Island stone masonry is the rear wall of the ahu at Vinapu. Made without mortar by shaping hard basalt rocks of up to seven tons to match each other exactly, it has a superficial similarity to some Inca stone walls in South America.

Houses of the Rapa Nui

Two types of houses are known to have existed in Easter Island History: *hare paenga*, a house with an elliptical foundation made with basalt slabs and covered with a thatched roof that resembled an overturned boat, and *hare oka*, a round stone structure. Related stone structures called *tupa* look very similar to the *hare oka*, except that the *tupa* were inhabited by astronomer-priests and located near the coast, where the movements of the stars could be easily observed. Settlements also contain *hare moa*, or oblong stone structures that were used to house chickens. The houses at the ceremonial village of Orongo are unique in that they are shaped like *hare paenga* but are made entirely of flat basalt slabs found inside the Rano Kao crater. The entrances to all the houses are very low, requiring a person to crawl in order to enter.

Petroglyphs

Easter Island has one of the richest collections of petroglyphs in all Polynesia, with over 4,000 petroglyphs cataloged. Designs and images were carved out of rock for a variety of reasons, including to create totems, to mark territory, or to memorialize a person or event. There are distinct variations around the island in terms of the frequency and particular themes among petroglyphs, with a concentration of Birdmen at Orongo. Other subjects include sea turtles, Komari (vulvas), and Makemake, the chief god of the Tangata manu or Birdman cult.

Rongorongo

Easter Island once had an apparent script called *rongorongo*. Glyphs include pictographic and geometric shapes; the texts were incised in wood in reverse boustrophedon direction. It was first reported by a French missionary, Eugène Eyraud, in 1864. At that time, several islanders said they could understand the writing, but according to tradition, only ruling families and priests were ever literate, and none survived the slave raids and subsequent epidemics. Despite numerous attempts, the surviving texts have not been deciphered, so it is not certain that they were actually writing.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- adze. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/adze. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of the Pacific Islands. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Pacific_Islands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Marquesan culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquesan_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marquesas Islands. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquesas_Islands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cook Islands. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tapa. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tapa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- British_Museum_-_Fan_with_carved_wooden_figure_handle_from_Rarotonga.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands_art#/media/File:British_Museum_-_Fan_with_carved_wooden_figure_handle_from_Rarotonga.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Woman sewing a tivaevae, Rarotonga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Woman_sewing_a_tivaevae,_Rarotonga.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cook Islands carved wood figure, British Museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cook_Islands_carved_wood_figure,_British_Museum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Easter island. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_island. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ahu. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ahu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- boustrophedon. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/boustrophedon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- moai. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/moai. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- British_Museum_-_Fan_with_carved_wooden_figure_handle_from_Rarotonga.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands_art#/media/File:British_Museum_-_Fan_with_carved_wooden_figure_handle_from_Rarotonga.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Woman sewing a tivaevae, Rarotonga. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Woman_sewing_a_tivaevae,_Rarotonga.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cook Islands carved wood figure, British Museum. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cook_Islands_carved_wood_figure,_British_Museum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- AhuTongariki. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AhuTongariki.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Easter island and south america. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Easter_island_and_south_america.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 26.4: Polynesia is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.5: Art of New Zealand

Maori Art in New Zealand

Traditional New Zealand art consists of the art of the Māori people, who first settled the island between 1250–1300 CE.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key elements of prehistoric and traditional Māori from New Zealand

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- New Zealand art includes traditional Māori art and more recent forms taking inspiration from Māori, European, and other traditions. Polynesians settled New Zealand in 1250–1300 CE and developed a distinctive Māori culture.
- Charcoal drawings, estimated between 500 and 800 years old, can be found on limestone rock shelters in the center of the South Island, with over 500 sites stretching from Kaikoura to North Otago.
- Māori visual art of New Zealand consists primarily of four forms: carving, tattooing (ta moko), weaving, and painting.
- Carving was done in wood, bone, and stone, and carvings were used to create jewelry and decorate houses, fence poles, containers, and other objects.
- Ta moko is the art of traditional Māori tattooing, done with a chisel. Men were tattooed on many parts of their bodies, including faces, buttocks, and thighs, while women were usually tattooed only on the lips and chin.
- Weaving was used to create numerous things, from decorative wall panels in important buildings to functional clothing and bags.

Key Terms

- **koru**: A spiral shape based on the shape of a new unfurling silver fern frond and symbolizing new life, growth, strength, and peace; an integral symbol in Maori art, carving, and tattoos.
- **Māori**: The indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand, originating with settlers from eastern Polynesia who arrived in New Zealand in several waves of canoe voyages at some time between 1250 and 1300 CE.

Overview: New Zealand

New Zealand is an island country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. The country geographically comprises two main landmasses —that of the North and South Islands—and numerous smaller islands. Because of its remoteness, it was one of the last lands to be settled by humans. Polynesians settled New Zealand in 1250–1300 CE and developed a distinctive Māori culture. Europeans first made contact in 1642 CE. The British and Irish immigrants brought aspects of their own culture to New Zealand and heavily influenced Māori culture, particularly with the introduction of Christianity. More recently, American, Australian, Asian, and other European cultures have exerted influence on New Zealand.

New Zealand art includes traditional Māori art, which was developed in New Zealand from Polynesian art forms, and more recent forms, which take their inspiration from Māori, European, and other traditions.

Early Charcoal Drawings

Charcoal drawings can be found on limestone rock shelters in the center of the South Island, with over 500 sites stretching from Kaikoura to North Otago. The drawings are estimated to be between 500 and 800 years old and portray animals, people, and fantastic creatures. Some of the birds pictured are long extinct and were drawn by early Māori; however by the time Europeans arrived, local inhabitants did not know the origins of the drawings.

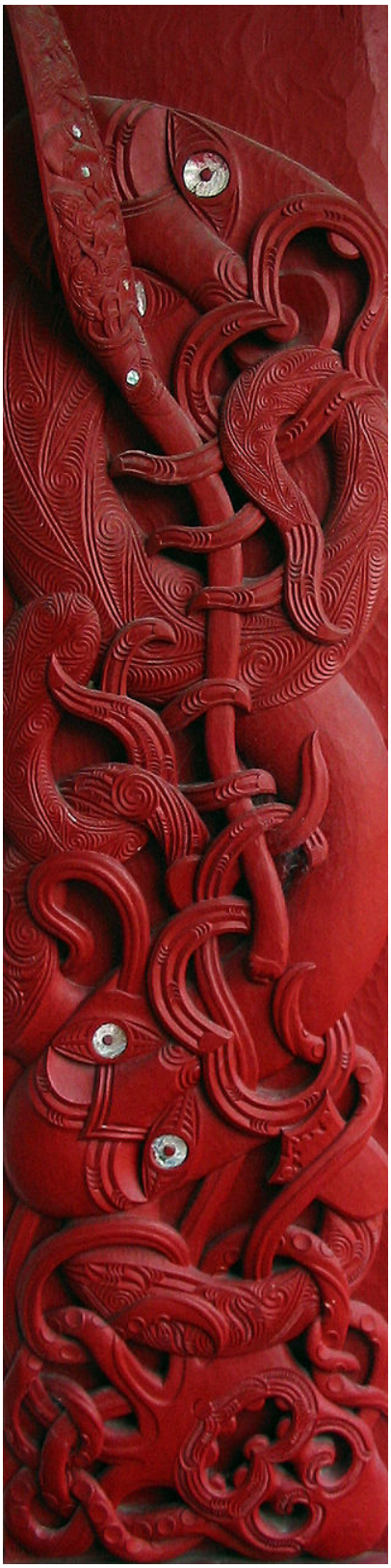
Traditional Māori Art

Māori visual art consists primarily of four forms: carving, tattooing (ta moko), weaving, and painting. Traditional Māori art was highly spiritual and conveyed information about ancestry and other culturally important topics. Most traditional Māori art was highly stylized and featured motifs such as the spiral, the chevron, and the *koru*. The colors black, white, and red dominated.

Portrait of Hinepare of Ngāti Kahungunu by Gottfried Lindauer, showing chin moko, pounamu hei-tiki, and woven cloak: This portrait shows traditional jewelry (known as hei-tiki), woven cloth, and chin moko, or tattooing.

Carving

Carving was done in wood, bone, and stone. Wood carvings were used to decorate houses, fence poles, containers, and other objects. Both stone and bone were used to create jewelry such as the *hei-tiki*. The introduction of metal tools by Europeans allowed more intricacy and delicacy, causing stone and bone fish hooks and other tools to become purely decorative.



Māori carving: Late 20th century red carved house post depicting the navigator Kupe. Although an essentially traditional style, this carving was created using metal tools and uses modern paints, creating a form distinct from that of pre-European times.

Ta moko

Ta moko is the art of traditional Māori tattooing, done with a chisel. Men were tattooed on many parts of their bodies, including faces, buttocks, and thighs. Women were usually tattooed only on the lips and chin. Moko conveyed a person's ancestry. The art declined in the 19th century following the introduction of Christianity, but in recent decades it has undergone a revival.

Weaving

Weaving was used to create numerous things, including wall panels in meeting houses and other important buildings, as well as clothing and bags (known as *kete*). While many of these were purely functional, others were true works of art, taking hundreds of hours to complete and often given as gifts to important people. In pre-European times, the main medium for weaving was flax; however, following the arrival of Europeans, cotton, wool, and other textiles were also used.

Painting

In classical Māori art, painting was not an important art form. It was mainly used as a minor decoration in meeting houses, in stylized forms such as the *koru*. Europeans introduced Māori to their more figurative style of art, and in the 19th century, less stylized depictions of people and plants began to appear in place of traditional carvings and woven panels.

European Art in New Zealand

European contact with New Zealand heavily influenced traditional Māori art of the region.

Learning Objectives

Describe the influences of European art in New Zealand

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Europeans first made contact with New Zealand in 1642 CE, and the British and Irish invaders heavily influenced Māori culture and art, particularly with the introduction of Christianity.
- Europeans began producing art in New Zealand as soon as they arrived, with landscape art and painting becoming very popular.
- From the late 19th century, many Pākehā (New Zealanders not of Māori origin, usually of European ancestry) attempted to create a distinctive New Zealand style of art, sometimes appropriating Māori artistic styles.
- From the early 20th century, politician Apirana Ngata fostered a renewal of traditional Māori art forms, establishing a school of Māori arts in Rotorua. Many Māori artists became highly successful in blending elements of Māori culture with European modernism.

Key Terms

- **koru**: A spiral shape based on the shape of a new unfurling silver fern frond and symbolizing new life, growth, strength, and peace; an integral symbol in Māori art, carving, and tattoos.
- **Māori**: The indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand, originating with settlers from eastern Polynesia who arrived in New Zealand in several waves of canoe voyages some time between 1250 and 1300 CE.

Background: New Zealand Art

Because of its remoteness, New Zealand was one of the last lands to be settled by humans. Polynesians settled New Zealand in 1250–1300 CE and developed a distinctive Māori culture, and Europeans first made contact in 1642 CE. The British and Irish invaders brought aspects of their own culture to New Zealand and heavily influenced Māori culture, particularly with the introduction of Christianity. More recently, American, Australian, Asian, and other European cultures have exerted influence on New Zealand.

Early Landscapes and Portraiture

Europeans began producing art in New Zealand as soon as they arrived, with many exploration ships including an artist to record newly discovered places, people, flora, and fauna. Landscape art was popular among early invaders, with prints used to promote further settlement and invasion of New Zealand. Notable landscape artists included Augustus Earle and William Fox. However, the most successful artists of this period, Charles Goldie and Gottfried Lindauer, were noted primarily for their portraits of the indigenous Māori people.

Early European Portraits: Portrait of a New Zealand man, Sydney Parkinson, 1784, probably from a sketch made in 1769.

19th Century

From the late 19th century, many Pākehā (New Zealanders not of Māori origin, usually of European ancestry) attempted to create a distinctive New Zealand style of art. Many, such as Rita Angus, continued to work on landscapes, with attempts to depict New Zealand's harsh light. Others appropriated Māori artistic styles; Gordon Walters created many paintings and prints based on the *koru*. New Zealand's most highly regarded 20th century artist was Colin McCahon, who attempted to use international styles such as cubism in New Zealand contexts.

Portrait of Hinepare of Ngāti Kahungunu by Gottfried Lindauer (1890), showing chin moko, pounamu hei-tiki, and woven cloak: Gottfried Lindauer was known for his portraits of the Māori people.

20th Century

From the early 20th century, politician Apirana Ngata fostered a renewal of traditional Māori art forms, establishing a school of Māori arts in Rotorua. The visual arts flourished in the later decades of the 20th century, with the increased cultural sophistication of many New Zealanders. Many Māori artists became highly successful in blending elements of Māori culture with European modernism. Ralph Hotere is New Zealand's highest selling living artist. Others include Shane Cotton and Michael Parekowhai.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- New zealand. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_zealand%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New Zealand art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Maori. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Maori. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- koru. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/koru. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 320px-KupeWheke.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_art#/media/File:KupeWheke.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hinepare. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hinepare.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- New Zealand Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New Zealand. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_zealand%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- 320px-KupeWheke.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_art#/media/File:KupeWheke.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hinepare. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hinepare.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-MaoriChief1784.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_art#/media/File:MaoriChief1784.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hinepare.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_art#/media/File:Hinepare.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 26.5: Art of New Zealand is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.6: Hawaiian Art

Pre-European Hawaiian Art

Hawaiian art can be divided into pre-European art, non-native art, and art produced by Hawaiians incorporating western ideas.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate indiginous Hawaiian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hawaiian art can be divided into pre-European art, non-native art, and art produced by Hawaiians incorporating western ideas.
- Polynesians arrived in Hawaii 1,000–2,000 years ago, and in 1778 Captain James Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit Hawaii, calling it the Sandwich Islands.
- Traditional Hawaiian art includes wood carvings, feather work, petroglyphs, bark cloth (called *kapa* in Hawaiian), and tattoos.
- Kapa is a fabric made by Native Hawaiians from the bast fibers of certain species of trees and shrubs; it is based primarily on linear elements and used primarily for clothing, bed covers, robes, and banners.

Key Terms

- **hula**: A form of chant and dance which was developed in the Hawaiian Islands by the Polynesians who originally settled there.
- **Captain James Cook**: A British explorer, navigator, cartographer, and captain in the Royal Navy who made detailed maps of Newfoundland prior to making three voyages to the Pacific Ocean, during which he achieved the first recorded European contact with the eastern coastline of Australia and the Hawaiian Islands, and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand.

Overview: Hawaii

Hawaii represents the northernmost extension of the vast Polynesian triangle of the south and central Pacific Ocean. While traditional Hawaiian culture remains only as vestiges in modern Hawaiian society, there are reenactments of the ceremonies and traditions throughout the islands. Some of these cultural influences are strong enough to affect the United States at large, including the popularity (in greatly modified form) of luaus and hula.

The Hawaiian archipelago consists of 137 islands in the Pacific Ocean that are far from any other land. Polynesians arrived there 1,000–2,000 years ago, and in 1778 Captain James Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit Hawaii (which they called the Sandwich Islands). The art created in these islands may be divided into art existing prior to Cook's arrival; art produced by recently arrived westerners; and art produced by Hawaiians incorporating western materials and ideas.

Traditional Hawaiian Art

Art existing prior to the invasion of Europeans is very similar to the art of other Pacific Islanders. This art includes wood carvings, feather work, petroglyphs, bark cloth (called *kapa* in Hawaiian and *tapa* elsewhere in the Pacific), and tattoos. Native Hawaiians had neither metal nor woven cloth. Production of these styles of art continued after Cook's arrival, and a few craftsmen still produce traditional Hawaiian arts, either to sell to tourists or to preserve native culture.

Hawaiian kapa, 18th century: Kapa is a kind of bark cloth, or fabric, made by Native Hawaiians from the bast fibers of certain species of trees and shrubs.

Kapa

Kapa is a fabric made by Native Hawaiians from the bast fibers of certain species of trees and shrubs. It is similar to *tapa* found elsewhere in Polynesia, but it differs in the methods used in its creation. Kapa is based primarily on the creative combination of linear elements that cross and converge to form squares, triangles, chevrons, and diagonal forms, giving a feeling of boldness and directness. The fabric was used primarily for clothing, such as the *malo* worn by men as a loincloth, the *pāʻū* worn by women as a wraparound, and the *kīhei* worn over the shoulders. *Kapa moe* (bed covers) were reserved for the aliʻi or chiefly caste, while kapa robes were used by kāhuna or priestly caste. Kapa was also used as banners to hang leis and images of gods.

Cultural anthropologists over the course of the 20th century identified techniques in the creation of kapa that are unique to the Hawaiian Islands, involving soaking the bark in water, laying it out on a stone tablet, and beating it with a rounded beater. In the 18th century, pieces of kapa were often made of grooving or ribbing, done by pushing a dampened cloth into the grooves of a special board. The process of making kapa was done primarily by women; young girls would learn by helping their mothers, over time doing more of the work until they could make kapa themselves.

Non-Native Hawaiian Art

Non-native Hawaiian art began with the arrival of the first westerners to the island and was characterized by the work of the Volcano School.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how non-native produced Hawaiian art differs from indigenous Hawaiian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While Polynesians arrived on the island of Hawaii 1,000–2,000 years ago, the first westerners did not arrive until Captain James Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit the island in 1778.
- Some of the first westerners to visit Hawaii were artists, who sketched and painted Hawaii's people and landscapes using imported materials and concepts.
- The Volcano School was a group of non-native Hawaiian artists who painted dramatic nocturnal scenes of Hawaii's erupting volcanoes.

- Some of the artists of the Volcano School also produced watercolors, which, by the nature of the medium, tended to be diurnal.
- Two volcanoes on the Island of Hawaii, Kilauea and Mauna Loa, were intermittently active during the 1880s and 1890s, when interest in Volcano School paintings peaked.

Key Terms

- **diurnal**: Happening or occurring during daylight, or primarily active during that time.

Overview of Hawaiian Art

The Hawaiian archipelago consists of 137 islands in the Pacific Ocean that are far from any other land. Polynesians arrived there 1,000–2,000 years ago, and in 1778 Captain James Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit Hawaii. The art created in these islands can be divided into traditional Hawaiian art; art produced by recently arrived westerners; and art produced by Hawaiians incorporating western materials and ideas.

Art Produced by Non-Native Hawaiians

Early Exploration

Some of the first westerners to visit Hawaii were artists—both professional and amateur. Many of the European invaders' ships had professional artists on board to record their discoveries and document the landscape, people, flora, and fauna of the region. These artists sketched and painted Hawaii's people and landscapes using imported materials and concepts. Artists in this category include Alfred Thomas Agate (American 1812–1849), Jean Charlot (French 1898–1979), Robert Dampier (English 1800–1874), Joseph Henry Sharp (American 1859–1953), and many others. Night scenes of erupting volcanoes were especially popular, giving rise to the Volcano School.

The Volcano School

The Volcano School was a group of non-native Hawaiian artists who painted dramatic nocturnal scenes of Hawaii's erupting volcanoes. Some of the artists also produced watercolors, which, by the nature of the medium, tended to be diurnal. Two volcanoes on the Island of Hawaii, Kilauea and Mauna Loa, were intermittently active during the 1880s and 1890s, when interest in Volcano School paintings peaked. Getting to Kilauea, the more frequently painted volcano, required an arduous two or three day roundtrip journey on horseback. Printmaker and art educator Huc-Mazelet Luquiens called this period "a little Hawaiian renaissance."

Jules Tavernier's painting *Full Moon over Kilauea*, 1887: Jules Tavernier was a member of the Volcano School, a group of non-native Hawaiian artists who painted dramatic nocturnal scenes of Hawaii's erupting volcanoes.

Jules Tavernier (1844–1889), a French artist, was arguably the most important Volcano School painter. Other artists include Ernst William Christmas, Constance Fredericka Gordon Cumming, Charles Furneaux, D. Howard Hitchcock, Ogura Yonesuke Itoh, Ambrose McCarthy Patterson, Titian Ramsey Peale, William Pinkney Toler, William Twigg-Smith, and Lionel Walden, among others. A selection of Volcano School paintings is usually on display at the Honolulu Museum of Art.

Hawaiian Art with Western Influences

Hawaiian art today retains a great deal of traditional Hawaiian influence while also incorporating western styles and themes.

Learning Objectives

Explain how Western influences manifest in Hawaiian art

Key Takeaways

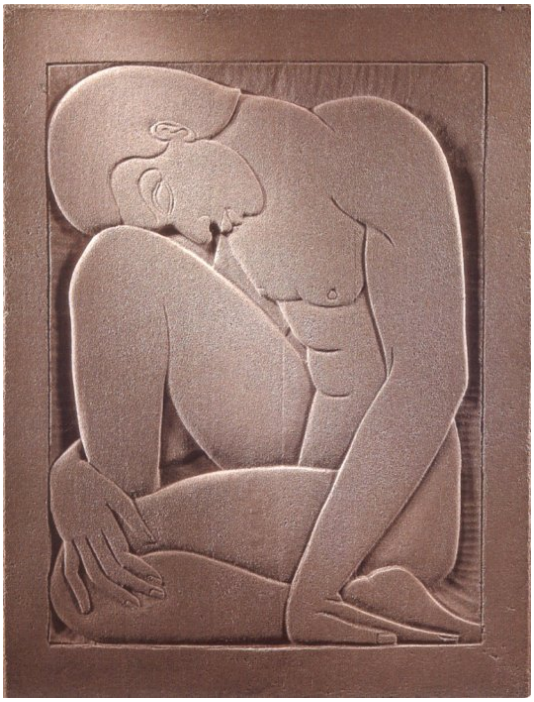
Key Points

- The art created in these islands can be divided into traditional Hawaiian art; art produced by recently arrived westerners; and art produced by Hawaiians incorporating western materials and ideas.
- A great deal of artwork produced by indigenous Hawaiians, as well as Hawaii's native-born and long-term residents, now incorporates western materials and ideas, including paintings on canvas and quilts.
- Many Hawaiian artists remain distinctly Hawaiian in subject matter, while others range among widely diverse styles.
- In 1967, Hawaii became the first state in the nation to implement a "Percent for Art" law, in which 1% of the construction costs of new public schools and state buildings is designated for the acquisition of works of art, either by commission or by purchase.

Key Terms

- **Hula**: A form of chant and dance that was developed in the Hawaiian Islands by the Polynesians who originally settled there.
- **Captain James Cook**: A British explorer, navigator, cartographer, and captain in the Royal Navy who made detailed maps of Newfoundland prior to making three voyages to the Pacific Ocean, during which he achieved the first recorded European contact with the eastern coastline of Australia and the Hawaiian Islands, and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand.

Overview of Hawaiian Art



Stone bas-relief of fallen male nude by Marguerite Louis Blasingame: Sculptor Marguerite Louis Blasingame is one of the many 19th century artists who incorporates both Hawaiian and western themes in her art.

The Hawaiian archipelago consists of 137 islands in the Pacific Ocean that are far from any other land. Polynesians arrived there 1,000–2,000 years ago, and in 1778 Captain James Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit Hawaii. The art created in these islands can be divided into traditional Hawaiian art; art produced by recently arrived westerners; and art produced by Hawaiians incorporating western materials and ideas.

Western Influence on Hawaiian Art

The arrival of westerners to Hawaii and the subsequent formation of Hawaii into a state of the U.S. have greatly impacted the art of native Hawaiians. A great deal of artwork produced by indigenous Hawaiians, as well as Hawaii's native-born and long-term residents, now incorporates western materials and ideas, including paintings on canvas and quilts. Many Hawaiian artists remain distinctly Hawaiian in subject matter, while others range among widely diverse styles. Most of the art currently produced in Hawaii integrates a melding of traditional Hawaiian and western influence. Notable artists include sculptor Satoru Abe (born Hawaii 1926–), sculptor Bumpei Akaji (born Hawaii 1921-2002), sculptor Marguerite Louis Blasingame (born Hawaii 1906–1947), ceramicist Sally Fletcher-Murchison (born Hawaii 1933–), Joseph Nawahi (born Hawaii 1842–1896), Reuben Tam (born Hawaii 1916–1991), Isami Doi (born Hawaii 1903–1965), and others.

Hawaiian Art Today

In 1967, Hawaii became the first state in the nation to implement a "Percent for Art" law. The Art in State Buildings Law established the Art in Public Places Program and designated one percent of the construction costs of new public schools and state buildings for the acquisition of works of art, either by commission or by purchase. Public collections of Hawaiian art may be found at the Honolulu Museum of Art, the Bishop Museum (also in Honolulu), the Hawaii State Art Museum, and the Georg-August University of Göttingen in Germany.

Hawaii is also home to numerous cultural events that illustrate the rich traditions of the island pre-European influence. The annual Merrie Monarch Festival is an international Hula competition, and the state is home to the Hawaii International Film Festival, the premier film festival for Pacific rim cinema. Honolulu is also home to the state's long running LGBT film festival, the Rainbow Film Festival.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Volcano School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Volcano_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hawaiian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hawaii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaii%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- diurnal. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diurnal. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Captain James Cook. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain%20James%20Cook. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- hula. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hula. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kapa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hawaiian kapa, 18th century, Cook-Foster Collection at Georg-August University in Gu00f6ttingen, Germany. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hawaiian_kapa,_18th_century,_Cook-Foster_Collection_at_Georg-August_University_in_G%C3%B6ttingen,_Germany.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hawaiian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: www.en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pre-European Hawaiian Art. **Provided by**: Boundless. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/art-history/textbooks/boundless-art-history-textbook/oceania-32/hawaiian-art-929/pre-european-hawaiian-art-715-5917/issues/new/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Volcano School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Volcano_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Hawaiian kapa, 18th century, Cook-Foster Collection at Georg-August University in Gu00f6ttingen, Germany. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hawaiian_kapa,_18th_century,_Cook-Foster_Collection_at_Georg-August_University_in_G%C3%B6ttingen,_Germany.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- on-over-kilauea-27-2c-1887.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jules_Tavernier's_painting_'Full_Moon_over_Kilauea',_1887.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hawaiian Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hawaiian kapa, 18th century, Cook-Foster Collection at Georg-August University in Gu00f6ttingen, Germany. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hawaiian_kapa,_18th_century,_Cook-Foster_Collection_at_Georg-August_University_in_G%C3%B6ttingen,_Germany.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- on-over-kilauea-27-2c-1887.@2x.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jules_Tavernier's_painting_'Full_Moon_over_Kilauea',_1887.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Marguerite_Louis_Blasingame_-_stone_bas-relief_of_fallen_male_nude.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marguerite_Louis_Blasingame#/media/File:Marguerite_Louis_Blasingame_-_stone_bas-relief_of_fallen_male_nude.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 26.6: Hawaiian Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

26.7: Modern Oceanic Art

Pacific Arts Festival

The Pacific Arts Festival celebrates the arts of indigenous cultures in the Oceanic region.

Learning Objectives

Describe the significance of the Pacific Arts Festival

Key Takeaways

Key Points

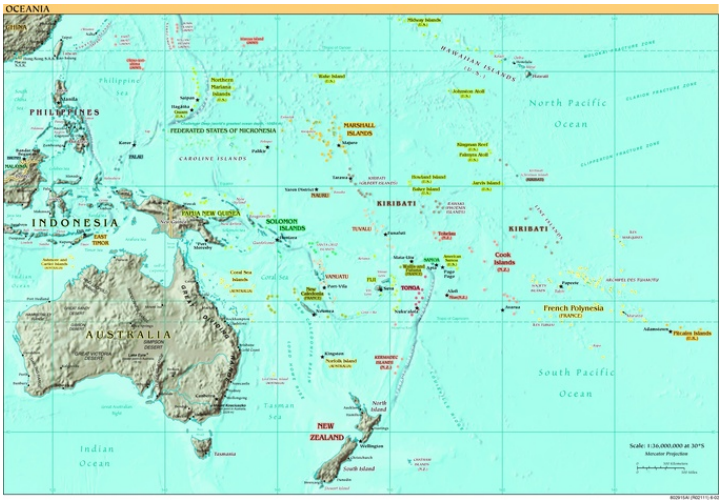
- The Festival of Pacific Arts, or Pacific Arts Festival, is a traveling festival hosted every four years by a different country in Oceania.
- The Pacific Arts Festival was conceived by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community as a means to stem the erosion of traditional cultural practices by sharing and exchanging culture at each festival.
- By its vastness, the Pacific Ocean inhibits social and cultural interchange between the inhabitants of its island countries. The festival is not a competition but a cultural exchange, and it serves to both reunite people and reinforce regional identity and mutual appreciation of Pacific-wide culture.
- Participating countries select artist-delegates to represent the nation at this crossroads of cultures, which is considered a great honor.

Key Terms

- **Oceania**: A geographical region composed of many islands (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia) plus Australasia; it is located between Asia, Antarctica, and the Americas.

Introduction

The Festival of Pacific Arts, or Pacific Arts Festival, is a traveling festival hosted every four years by a different country in Oceania. It was conceived by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, former South Pacific Commission, as a means to stem the erosion of traditional cultural practices by sharing and exchanging culture at each festival. The major theme of the festival is traditional song and dance. The first festival was held in May of 1972 in Suva, Fuji, and it has been held roughly every four years since in countries around the Pacific. The 2012 Festival was hosted by the Soloman Islands from July 1–14 with the theme of "Culture in Harmony with Nature." From May 22 to June 4, 2016, the 12th ever Festival of Pacific Arts was held in Hagåtña, Guam, with the theme of "What We Own, What We Have, What We Share, United Voices of the PACIFIC." The next Festival will take place in 2020 in Hawaii.



Map of Oceania: This map illustrates the nations of the Oceanic region.

The Festival's Value and Purpose

By its vastness, the Pacific Ocean inhibits social and cultural interchange between the inhabitants of its island countries. The festival is not a competition but a cultural exchange, and it serves to both reunite people and reinforce regional identity and mutual appreciation of Pacific-wide culture. Participating countries select artist-delegates to represent the nation at this crossroads of cultures, which is considered a great honor.

The Pacific Cultural Council selects the host country, recognizing that each participating country desires the opportunity to showcase its unique indigenous culture by hosting the festival. Host selection is based on principles of equity, and preference is given to countries which have not yet hosted. The festival's host country pays participants' costs of local travel, accommodation, meals, and other forms of hospitality. Entry to all artistic events is free to the public, thereby maximizing cultural outreach and inclusion.

In 2008, about 2,000 artists attended the Festival of Pacific Arts from the following participating countries: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Easter Island, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Sāmoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Taiwan was allowed to send a delegation of 80 performers and artists, most of whom were Taiwanese aborigines, to the Festival of Pacific Arts for the first time in 2008.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Pacific Arts Festival. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Arts_Festival. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oceania. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Oceania. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oceania. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oceania.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 26.7: Modern Oceanic Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

27: Africa in the Modern Period

27.1: Religious Art in Africa

27.2: African Clothmaking

27.3: Other African Art

27.4: Contemporary Art

This page titled 27: Africa in the Modern Period is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

27.1: Religious Art in Africa

African Art and the Spirit World

Beliefs about the spirit world are deeply embedded in traditional African culture, but were heavily influenced by Christianity and Islam.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the role of African masks, statues, and sculptures in relation to the spirit world

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Most traditional African cultures include beliefs about the spirit world, which is widely represented through both traditional and modern art such as masks, statues, and sculptures.
- Wooden masks are often used to depict deities or ancestors; in many traditions, they are believed to channel spirits when worn by ceremonial dancers.
- Statues and sculptures are also used to represent, connect to, or communicate with spiritual forces.
- Today, Africans profess a wide variety of religious beliefs, the most common of which are Christianity and Islam; perhaps less than 15% still follow traditional African religions.
- Despite the drastic decrease in native African religions, some modern art in Africa has worked to reincorporate traditional spiritual beliefs, such as in modern Makonde Art depicting spirits.

Key Terms

- **receptacle**: A container.
- **sanctuaries**: Consecrated (or sacred) areas of a church or temple.

Background

Like all human cultures, African folklore and religion is diverse and varied. Culture and spirituality share space and are deeply intertwined in most African cultures, which have been heavily influenced by the introduction of Christianity and Islam during the era of European colonization. Most traditional African cultures include beliefs about the spirit world, which is widely represented through both traditional and modern art such as masks, statues, and sculptures. In some societies, artistic talents were themselves seen as ways to please higher spirits.

Traditional Influences on Contemporary Religious Art

Masks and Rituals

Wooden masks, which often take the form of animals, humans, or mythical creatures, are one of the most commonly found forms of traditional art in western Africa. These masks are often used to depict deities or represent the souls of the departed. They may be worn by a dancer in ceremonies for celebrations, deaths, initiations, or crop harvesting. In many traditional mask ceremonies, the dancer goes into deep trance, and during this state of mind he or she is believed to communicate with ancestors in the spirit world. The masks themselves often represent an ancestral spirit, which is believed to possess the wearer of the mask. Most African masks are made with wood and can also be decorated with ivory, animal hair, plant fibers, pigments, stones, and semi-precious gems.

Mask from Gabon: A traditional mask from Gabon.

Statues and sculptures are also used to represent or connect to spiritual forces. For example, Bambara statuettes, such as the Chiwara, are used as spiritually charged objects during ritual. During the annual ceremonies of the Guan society, a group of up to seven figures, some dating back to the 14th century, are removed from their sanctuaries by the elder members of the society. The wooden sculptures, which represent a highly stylized animal or human figure, are washed, re-oiled and offered sacrifices. The Kono and Komo societies use similar statues to serve as receptacles for spiritual forces. The Igbo would traditionally make clay altars and shrines of their deities, usually featuring various figures. In the Kingdom of Kongo, nkisi were objects believed to be inhabited by spirits. Often carved in the shape of animals or humans, these “power objects” were believed to help aid in the communication with the spirit world.

Modern Religion

Today, the countries of Africa contain a wide variety of religious beliefs, and statistics on religious affiliation are difficult to come by. Christianity and Islam make up the largest religions in contemporary Africa, and some sources say that less than 15% still follow traditional African religions. Despite the drastic decrease in native African religions, some modern art in Africa has worked to reincorporate traditional spiritual beliefs. For example, modern Makonde Art has turned to abstract figures in which spirits, or Shetani, play an important role.

Modern Makonde carving in ebony: Modern Makonde sculptures often depict spirits, or Shetani.

Masks in the Kalabari Kingdom

Culture and artistic festivities of the Kalabari Kingdom involve the wearing of elaborate outfits and carved masks to celebrate the spirits.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the role of the spiritual in the masks of the Kalabari Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Kalabari Kingdom was an independent trading state of the Kalabari people, an Ijaw ethnic group, in the Niger River Delta. Today it is recognized as a traditional state in what is now Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Although the Ijaw are now primarily Christians, they also maintain elaborate traditional religious practices.
- Veneration of ancestors plays a central role in Ijaw traditional religion, while water spirits figure prominently in the Ijaw pantheon. In addition, the Ijaw practice a form of divination in which recently deceased individuals are interrogated on the causes of their death.
- The role of prayer in the traditional Ijaw system of belief is to maintain the living in the good graces of the water spirits among whom they dwelt before being born into this world.
- Each year, the Ijaw hold celebrations involving masquerades that last for several days in honor of the spirits.
- Ijaw men wearing elaborate outfits and carved masks dance to the beat of drums and manifest the influence of the water spirits through the quality and intensity of their dancing.

Key Terms

- **enculturation**: The process by which an individual adopts the behavior patterns of the culture in which he or she is immersed.
- **kin**: Race; family; breed; kind.

Introduction: The Kalabari

The Kalabari Kingdom, also called Elem Kalabari (New Shipping Port), or New Calabar by the Europeans, was an independent trading state of the Kalabari people, an Ijaw ethnic group, in the Niger River Delta. Today it is recognized as a traditional state in what is now Rivers State, Nigeria. As well as participating in trade, the Ijaw have traditionally been a fishing and farming culture.

Culture and Art

Although the Ijaw are now primarily Christians (95% profess to be), with Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism being the varieties of Christianity most prevalent among them, they also maintain elaborate traditional religious practices. Veneration of ancestors plays a central role in Ijaw traditional religion, while water spirits, known as *Owuamapu*, figure prominently in the Ijaw pantheon. In addition, the Ijaw practice a form of divination called *Igbadai*, in which recently deceased individuals are interrogated on the causes of their death. The Ijaw are also known to practice ritual acculturation, whereby an individual from a different and unrelated group undergoes rites to become Ijaw.

The Role of Ijaw Masks

Ijaw religious beliefs hold that water spirits are like humans, having personal strengths and shortcomings, and that humans dwell among the water spirits before being born. Each year, the Ijaw hold celebrations lasting for several days in honor of the spirits. Central to the festivities is the role of masquerades, in which men wearing elaborate outfits and carved masks dance to the beat of drums and manifest the influence of the water spirits through the quality and intensity of their dancing. Particularly spectacular masqueraders are believed to be possessed by the particular spirits on whose behalf they are dancing.

ljaw mask: Mask, Kalabari Ijo peoples, Nigeria, early 20th century, wood, pigment (National Museum of African Art).

Dogon Sculpture

Dogon sculpture primarily revolves around the themes of religious values, ideals, and freedoms.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Dogon art, sculpture, and rituals, as well as the background and location of the Dogon culture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Dogon are an ethnic group living in the central plateau region of the country of Mali, in the West of the African continent, and are well known for their unique sculptures. Dogon sculptures are not made to be seen publicly and are commonly hidden from the public eye within the houses of families, sanctuaries, or the hogon (spiritual leader).
- Dogon sculptures are typically characterized by an elongation of form and a mix of geometric and figurative images.
- The Dogon style has evolved into a kind of cubism: ovoid head, squared shoulders, tapered extremities, pointed breasts, forearms and thighs on a parallel plane, and hair stylized by three or four incised lines.

Key Terms

- **vessel**: A general term for all kinds of craft designed for transportation on water, such as ships or boats.
- **Tellem**: The people who inhabited the Bandiagara Escarpment in Mali from the 11th through 16th centuries CE.

Introduction: The Dogon People

The Dogon are an ethnic group living in the central plateau region of the country of Mali, in the West of the African continent. They migrated to the region around the 14th century CE. They are best known for their religious traditions, wooden sculpture, architecture, and funeral masquerades. The past century has seen significant changes in the social organization, material culture, and beliefs of the Dogon, partly because Dogon country is one of Mali's major tourist attractions.

Dogon Sculpture

Dogon art is primarily sculptural and revolves around religious values, ideals, and freedoms. Dogon sculptures are not made to be seen publicly and are commonly hidden from the public eye within the houses of families, sanctuaries, or the hogon (a spiritual leader of the Dogon people). The importance of secrecy is due to the symbolic meaning behind the pieces and the process by which they are made. Dogon sculptures are typically characterized by an elongation of form and a mix of geometric and figurative images.

Dogon Sculpture: Dogon sculptures are typically characterized by an elongation of form and a combination of geometric and figurative images.

Themes

Themes found throughout Dogon sculpture consist of figures with raised arms, superimposed bearded figures, horsemen, stools with caryatids, women with children, figures covering their faces, women grinding pearl millet, women bearing vessels on their heads, donkeys bearing cups, musicians, dogs, quadruped-shaped troughs or benches, figures bending from the waist, mirror-images, apron-wearing figures, and standing figures. Signs of other contacts and origins are evident in Dogon art; the Dogon people were not the first inhabitants of the area, and influence from the Tellem, or the people who inhabited the region in Mali between the 11th and 16th centuries CE, is evident in the use of rectilinear designs.

Dogon art is extremely versatile, although common stylistic characteristics—such as a tendency towards stylization—are apparent on the statues. Their art deals with Dogon myths, whose complex ensembles regulate the life of the individual. The sculptures are preserved in innumerable sites of worship and personal or family altars, and often render the human body in a simplified way, reducing it to its essentials. Many sculptures recreate the silhouettes of the Tellem culture, featuring raised arms and a thick patina, or surface layer, made of blood and millet beer. The Dogon style has evolved into a kind of cubism: ovoid head, squared shoulders, tapered extremities, pointed breasts, forearms and thighs on a parallel plane, and hair stylized by three or four incised lines.

Uses

Dogon sculptures serve as a physical medium in initiations and as an explanation of the world. They serve to transmit an understanding to the initiated, who will decipher the statue according to the level of their knowledge. Carved animal figures, such as dogs and ostriches, are placed on village foundation altars to commemorate sacrificed animals, while granary doors, stools, and house posts are also adorned with figures and symbols. Kneeling statues of protective spirits are placed at the head of the dead to absorb their spiritual strength and to be their intermediaries with the world of the dead, into which they accompany the deceased before once again being placed on the shrines of the ancestors.

Mendé Masks

Mendé masks are commonly used in initiation ceremonies into secret Poro and Sande societies.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how Mendé masks are created and used by the Mendé people

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Mendé people are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone; they belong to a larger group of Mandé peoples who live throughout West Africa.
- The masks associated with the secret societies of the Mendé are probably the best known and most finely crafted in the region.
- Masks represent the collective mind of Mendé community; viewed as one body, they are seen as the Spirit of the Mendé people.
- The most important masks personify and embody the powerful spirits belonging to the medicine societies: the *goboi* and *gbini* of the Poro society (the secret society for men) and the *sowei* of the Sande society (the secret society for women).The features of a Sowei mask convey Mendé ideals of female morality and physical beauty; they are somewhat unusual because women wear the masks.

Key Terms

- **hale**: Secret societies of the Mendé people.

Background and Art of the Mendé People

The Mendé people are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, having roughly the same population as their neighbours the Temne people. Together, the Mendé and Temne both account for slightly more than 30% of the country's total population. The Mendé belong to a larger group of Mande peoples who live throughout West Africa. Mostly farmers and hunters, the Mendé are

divided into two groups: the *halemo (*or members of the *hale* or secret societies) and the *kpowa* (people who have never been initiated into the hale). The Mendé believe that all humanistic and scientific power is passed down through the secret societies.

Mendé art is primarily found in the form of jewelry and carvings. The masks associated with the secret societies of the Mendé are probably the best known and are finely crafted in the region. The Mendé also produce beautifully woven fabrics, which are popular throughout western Africa, and gold and silver necklaces, bracelets, armlets, and earrings. The bells on the necklaces are of the type believed capable of being heard by spirits, ringing in both worlds, that of the ancestors and the living.

Mendé Masks

Masks represent the collective mind of the Mendé community; viewed as one body, they are seen as the Spirit of the Mendé people. The Mendé masked figures are a reminder that human beings have a dual existence; they live in the concrete world of flesh and material things as well as in the spirit world of dreams, faith, aspirations, and imagination.

The standard set of Mendé maskers includes about a dozen personalities embodying spirits of varying degrees of power and importance. The most important of these personify and embody the powerful spirits belonging to the medicine societies: the *goboi* and *gbini* of the Poro society (the secret society for men), the *sowei* of the Sande society (the secret society for women), and the *njaye* and *humoi* maskers belonging to the eponymous medicine societies. The maskers of the Sande and Poro societies are responsible for enforcing laws and are important symbolic presences in the rituals of initiation and in public ceremonies that mark the coronations and funerals of chiefs and society officials.

Sowei Masks

The features of a Sowei mask convey Mendé ideals of female morality and physical beauty. They are somewhat unusual in that women traditionally wear the masks. The bird on top of the head represents a woman's intuition that lets her see and know things that others can't. The high or broad forehead represents good luck or the sharp, contemplative mind of the ideal Mendé woman. Downcast eyes symbolize a spiritual nature, and it is through these small slits that a woman wearing the mask would look out of. The small mouth signifies the ideal woman's quiet and humble character. The markings on the cheeks are representative of the decorative scars girls receive as they step into womanhood. The neck rolls are an indication of the health of ideal women; they have also been called symbols of the pattern of concentric, circular ripples the Mendé spirit makes when emerging from the water. The intricate hairstyles reveal the close ties within a community of women. The holes at the base of the mask are where the rest of the costume is attached; a woman who wears these masks must not expose any part of her body, or it is believed a vengeful spirit may take possession of her.

When a girl becomes initiated into the Sande society (the Mendé secret society for women), the village's master woodcarver creates a special mask just for her. Helmet masks are made from a section of tree trunk, often of the kpole (cotton) tree, and then carved and hollowed to fit over the wearer's head and face. The woodcarver must wait until he has a dream that guides him to make the mask a certain way for the recipient. A mask must be kept hidden in a secret place when no one is wearing it. These masks appear not only in initiation rituals but also at important events such as funerals, arbitrations, and the installation of chiefs.

Helmet Mendé Mask: Helmet masks of the Mendé, Vai, Gola, Bassa and other peoples of the sub-region are the best documented instance of women's masking in Africa. These masks are used by the Sande association, a powerful organization with social, political and religious significance. Although worn only by women, these masks, as is the case elsewhere in Africa, are carved by men.

Gbini Masks

Gbini is considered to be the most powerful of all Mendé maskers; it appears both at the final ceremony of the Poro initiation process for a son of the paramount chief and also at the coronation of funeral of a paramount chief. Because of its power, women are made to stand far back from gbini and if a woman accidentally touches it, she must be anointed with medicine immediately.

The Gbini wears a large leopard skin, which indicates its association with the paramount chief. The flat, round headpiece resembles the chief's crown. The headpiece is constructed of animal hide stretched over a bamboo framework, and the hide is decorated with cowrie shells and black, white, and red strips of cloth that are worked into a geometric pattern. At the center is a round mirror. Several flaps that are similarly decorated hang down from the base of the headpiece and overlap the cape, which covers much of the wearer's torso.

Gbini mask: Gbini mask, Mendé (wood, leopard skin, sheepskin, antelope skin, raffia fiber, cotton cloth, cotton string, cowry shells), from the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Contemporary African Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_African_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- receptacle. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/receptacle. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Xhosa people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Xhosa_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Africa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people%23Religion_and_rites_of_passage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo religion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_religion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cultural Anthropology/Ritual and Religion. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cultural_Anthropology/Ritual_and_Religion. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- sanctuaries. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sanctuaries. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Masque blanc Punu-Gabon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Masque_blanc_Punu-Gabon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- IMG 2267u201377 b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2267%E2%80%9377_b.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Kalabari Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalabari_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ijaw people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Elem Kalabari. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Elem_Kalabari. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Kalabari tribe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalabari_tribe. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- enculturation. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/enculturation. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kin. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/kin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Masque blanc Punu-Gabon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Masque_blanc_Punu-Gabon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- IMG 2267u201377 b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2267%E2%80%9377_b.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IjoMask1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IjoMask1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- African Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_art#Dogon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dogon people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dogon_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vessel. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/vessel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tellem. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellem. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Masque blanc Punu-Gabon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Masque_blanc_Punu-Gabon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- IMG 2267u201377 b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2267%E2%80%9377_b.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IjoMask1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IjoMask1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dogon sculpture Louvre 70-1999-9-2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dogon_sculpture_Louvre_70-1999-9-2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Masquerade in Mende Culture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Masquerade_in_Mende_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mende people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mende_people%23Arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mende people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mende_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/hale. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Masque blanc Punu-Gabon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Masque_blanc_Punu-Gabon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- IMG 2267u201377 b. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IMG_2267%E2%80%9377_b.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- IjoMask1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:IjoMask1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dogon sculpture Louvre 70-1999-9-2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dogon_sculpture_Louvre_70-1999-9-2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- WLA ima Mende People helmet mask for Sande association. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WLA_ima_Mende_People_helmet_mask_for_Sande_association.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 1024px-Brooklyn_Museum_2004.77.1_Gbini_Mask.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Masquerade_in_Mende_culture#/media/File:Brooklyn_Museum_2004.77.1_Gbini_Mask.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 27.1: Religious Art in Africa is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

27.2: African Clothmaking

Bògòlanfini: Traditional Malian Cloth

Bògòlanfini is a traditional Malian fabric that is exported worldwide for use in fashion, fine art, and decoration.

Learning Objectives

Describe the bògòlanfini fabric of the San culture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Bògòlanfini, or “mud cloth,” is a handmade Malian cotton fabric traditionally dyed with fermented mud. It has an important place in traditional Malian culture and has, more recently, become a symbol of Malian cultural identity.
- The cloth is being exported worldwide for use in fashion, fine art, and decoration.
- In traditional bògòlanfini production, the cloth is soaked in a bath of dye from the leaves of the n’gallama tree and then painted in intricate motifs with a special fermented mud collected from riverbeds.
- Modern, simplified production techniques using simpler designed and faster methods that allow large quantities of bògòlanfini to be mass-produced six to seven times faster for the tourist and export markets.
- In Mali, the cloth is worn by people of all ethnicities, including prominently in Malian cinema and by Malian musicians, either as an expression of national or ethnic identity or as a fashion style.

Key Terms

- **motif**: A recurring or dominant element in a work of art.

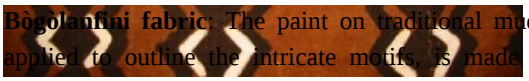
Bògòlanfini

Bògòlanfini, or bogolan (“mud cloth”), is a handmade Malian cotton fabric traditionally dyed with fermented mud. It has an important place in traditional Malian culture, and, more recently, it has become a symbol of Malian cultural identity. The cloth is being exported worldwide for use in fashion, fine art, and decoration. Its center of production is in San, a city located in the Ségou Region of Mali.

Traditional Production

In traditional bògòlanfini production, men weave the cloth and women dye it. On narrow looms, strips of cotton fabric about 15 centimeters (5.9 inches) wide are woven and stitched into cloths about 1 meter (3 feet) wide and 1.5 meters (5 feet) long.

The dyeing process begins with the cloth being soaked in a dye bath made from mashed and boiled, or soaked, leaves of the n’gallama tree (Anogeissus leiocarpa). Once it has taken on a yellow hue, the cloth is sun-dried and then painted with designs using a piece of metal or wood. The paint, carefully and repeatedly applied to outline the intricate motifs, is made of a special mud, collected from riverbeds and fermented for up to a year in a clay jar. Due to a chemical reaction between the mud and the dyed cloth, the brown color remains after the mud is washed off. Finally, the yellow n’gallama dye is removed from the unpainted parts of the cloth by applying soap or bleach, rendering them white. After prolonged use, the very dark brown color turns a variety of rich tones of brown, while the unpainted underside of the fabric retains a pale russet color.



Bògòlanfini fabric: The paint on traditional mud cloths, carefully and repeatedly applied to outline the intricate motifs, is made of a special mud collected from riverbeds and fermented for up to a year in a clay jar.

Simplified Production

Around Mopti and Djenné, a simpler method is used to produce bògòlanfini. The cloth is dyed yellow in wolo solution made from the leaves of Terminalia avicennoides and is then painted over with black designs. The yellow is either removed, producing a stark black and white design, or painted a deep orange with a solution from the bark of M'Peku (Lannea velutina).

Based on these simplified techniques, large quantities of bògòlanfini are now being mass-produced for the tourist and export markets. These fabrics use simpler designs, often applied by stencil and painted in black on a yellow or orange background. With this method, the cloth can be produced about six to seven times faster. The democratic reforms in Mali after the overthrow of Moussa Traoré in 1991 caused many young men to lose their previously guaranteed government jobs and scholarships, leading many to take up bògòlanfini production. Consequently, most cloth is now produced by men rather than women, and the traditional year-long apprenticeships have been replaced by short, informal training sessions.

Cultural Significance

Traditional Uses

Bògòlanfini : Bògòlanfini hanging in the market of Enndé.

In traditional Malian culture, bògòlanfini is worn by hunters, serving as camouflage, as ritual protection, and as a badge of status. Women are wrapped in bògòlanfini after their initiation into adulthood (which includes genital cutting) and immediately after childbirth, as the cloth is believed to have the power to absorb the dangerous forces released under such circumstances. Bògòlanfini patterns are rich in cultural significance, referring to historical events (such as a famous battle between a Malian warrior and the French), crocodiles (significant in Bambara mythology) or other objects, mythological concepts, and proverbs. Since about 1980, bògòlanfini has become a symbol of Malian cultural identity and is being promoted as such by the Malian government.

Modern Uses

In Mali, the cloth is now worn by people of all ethnicities, including prominently in Malian cinema and by Malian musicians, either as an expression of national or ethnic identity or as a fashion style. Particularly popular among young people, Bògòlanfini is made into a wide range of clothes, Western miniskirts, and jackets, as well as traditional flowing robes (boubous). The Malian fashion designer Chris Seydou has been credited with popularizing bògòlanfini in international fashion. Bògòlanfini has become a popular Malian export, notably to the United States. There, it is marketed as mud cloth, either as a symbol of Malian culture or as a generically ethnic decorative cloth.

In Art

Bògòlanfini is also produced as fine art by several Malian artists, notably by the *Groupe Bogolan Kasobané*, six artists who have been collaborating since 1978. These paintings are produced with vegetable dyes and mud but often feature designs unrelated to those of traditional fabrics; their newer motifs are also often found on clothing. Traditional bògòlanfini designs are also used on a wide range of commercial products, such as coffee mugs, curtains, towels, sheets, book covers, and wrapping paper.

Cloth Production in Bamum

The Bamum people are known for their extensive dyeing practice and their production of royal cloth, known as Ntieya.

Learning Objectives

Describe the history, dyes, and beaded sculptures of the Kingdom of Bamum

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Bamum people are a Bantu ethnic group of Cameroon with around 215,000 members; the pre-colonial kingdom of Bamum existed in what is now northwest Cameroon from 1394–1884.
- The economy of the Bamum Kingdom was largely agricultural, and slave owning was practiced on a small scale. The Bamum kingdom also traded with neighboring populations, importing salt, iron, beads, cotton goods, and copper objects.
- The Bamum people have an indigenous writing system, known as Bamum script or Shu Mom. The script was developed by Sultan Ibrahim Njoya in 1896, and is taught in Cameroon by the Bamum Scripts and Archives Project.
- The Bamun developed an extensive artistic culture at their capital of Fumban at the beginning of the 20th century. During Njoya's reign six dye pits containing various colors were maintained.
- The Bamum imported indigo-dyed raffia-sewn cloth from the Hausa to be used as royal cloth, known as Ntieya; Hausa craftsmen were kept at palace workshops to supply nobles and teach the art of dyeing.
- During the 19th and early 20th century, Bamum artists also created splendid beaded sculptures for the royal court.

Key Terms

- **indigo**: A purplish-blue color.
- **Hausa**: One of the largest ethnic groups in Africa; a diverse but culturally homogeneous people based primarily in the Sahelian and Sudanian Daura area of northern Nigeria and southeastern Niger, with significant numbers also living in parts of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Togo, Ghana, Sudan, Gabon, and Senegal.

Background: Bamum

The Bamum people are a Bantu ethnic group of Cameroon with around 215,000 members. The pre-colonial kingdom of Bamum (1394–1884) was a West African state in what is now northwest Cameroon. The Mbum, a part-Bantu ethnic group from northeast Cameroon, founded the kingdom at the end of the 14th century; its capital was the ancient walled city of Fumban.

The German Empire claimed the territory as the colony of Kamerun in 1884 and began a steady push inland. They initiated projects to improve the colony's infrastructure, relying on a harsh system of forced labor. With the defeat of Germany in World War I, Kamerun became a League of Nations mandate territory and was split into French Camero0n and British Cameroons in 1919. France integrated the economy of Cameroon with that of France and improved the infrastructure with capital investments, skilled workers, and continued forced labor.

Bamum Culture and Art

The Bamum people have an indigenous writing system known as Bamum script or Shu Mom. The script was developed by Sultan Ibrahim Njoya in 1896 and is taught in Cameroon by the Bamum Scripts and Archives Project. Little is known about the Bamum Kingdom's material and social culture during its existence. Originally, the language of state in the Bamum kingdom was that of the Tikar. This apparently did not last long, and the language of the conquered, Mben, was adopted.

Royal Cloth

The Bamum developed an extensive artistic culture at their capital of Fumban at the beginning of the 20th century. During the reign of Njoya, six dye pits containing various colors were maintained. The Bamum also imported indigo-dyed raffia-sewn cloth from the Hausa to be used as royal cloth. This royal cloth was called Ntieya, and Hausa craftsmen were kept at palace workshops to supply nobles and teach the art of dyeing. At the same time, during the 19th and early 20th century, Bamum artists created splendid beaded sculptures for the royal court. Colorful beadwork attached to a fabric base covers most of the carved wooden figures.

Bamum sculpture: This life-size male figure from the kingdom of Bamum in Cameroon is a visually compelling example of the splendid beaded sculptures Bamum artists created for the royal court in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Kente Cloth

The Asante are a clan of the Akan people and are known for their production of vibrantly colored Kente cloth.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Kente cloth and its cultural role

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Asante, or Ashanti, are a nation and ethnic group who live predominantly in and are native to Ashanti, Asanteman, and Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- Kente cloth (known as *Nwentom* in the Asante language), is an Asante type of silk and cotton fabric made of interwoven cloth strips that is native to the Asante people.
- The cloth was traditionally a royal and sacred cloth worn only at times of high importance, most often by Asante kings. Over time, the use of the Kente cloth have became more widespread, and it is one of the most well-known textiles in Africa.

- A variety of Kente patterns have been invented, each of which has a certain concept or concepts traditionally associated with it.
- The icon of African cultural heritage around the world, Kente cloth is identified by its dazzling, multicolored patterns of bright colors, geometric shapes, and bold designs.

Key Terms

- **crescent**: The figure of the moon as it appears in its first or last quarter, with concave and convex edges terminating in points.
- **replica**: An exact copy.

Background: The Asante People and Akan Art

The Asante, or Ashanti, are a nation and ethnic group who live predominantly in and are native to Ashanti, Asanteman, and in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. They speak Asante and are of Akan origin. Prior to European colonization, the Ashanti people developed a large and influential empire in West Africa. The Ashanti later developed the powerful Ashanti Confederacy, or Asanteman, and became the dominant presence in the region. The Asantehene is the political and spiritual head of the Asantes.

Art from the Akan people of West Africa is known primarily for Akan goldweights and cultural jewelry. The Akan people are also known for their strong connection between visual and verbal expressions. Akan culture values gold above all other metals, so the artwork and jewelry made of gold is of great worth to them, whether it be made for appearance, artistic expression, or more practical trading purposes.

Kente Cloth

Kente cloth (known as *Nwentom* in the Asante language), is an Asante type of silk and cotton fabric made of interwoven cloth strips that is native to the Asante people. The cloth was traditionally a royal and sacred cloth worn only at times of high importance, most often by Asante kings. Over time, the use of the Kente became more widespread; however, its importance has remained and it is held in high esteem among the Asante people.

Kente cloth is made in Kumasi, the capital of Asante, and in the Asanteland Peninsula (specifically in Bonwire, Adanwomase, Sakora Wonoo, and Ntonso in the Kwabre areas of the Asante). The cloth is also worn by many other groups who have been influenced by Asante people, making it one of the best known of all African textiles.

Traditions and Development

A variety of Kente patterns have been invented, each of which has a certain concept or concepts traditionally associated with it. For example, the *Obaakofoo Mmu Man* pattern symbolizes democratic rule; *Emaa Da* symbolizes novel creativity and knowledge from experience; and *Sika Fre Mogya* represents responsibility to share monetary success with one's relations. According to legend, Kente was first made by two Asante friends who went hunting in a forest and found a spider making its web. The friends stood and watched the spider for two days before returning home to implement what they had seen. West Africa has had a cloth weaving culture for centuries via the stripweave method, but Asante history tells of the cloth being created independent of outsider influence.

Uses

The icon of African cultural heritage around the world, Kente cloth is identified by its dazzling, multicolored patterns of bright colors, geometric shapes, and bold designs. A Kente cloth is typically sewn together from many narrow (about 3.9 inches wide) Kente stripes. Cloth that is characterized by weft designs woven into every available block of plain weave is called *adweneasa.* The Asante people choose Kente cloths as much for their names as for their colors and patterns; although the cloths are identified primarily by the patterns found in the lengthwise (warp) threads, there is often little correlation between appearance and name. Names are derived from several sources, including proverbs, historical events, important chiefs, queen mothers, and plants.

Kente cloth : Kente weaving is a traditional craft among the Asante people of Ghana. A kente cloth is typically sewn together from many narrow (about 3.9 inches wide) kente stripes. This image shows different colorful patterns of typical Asante Kente stripes.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- San, Mali. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/San,_Mali. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bu00f2gu00f2lanfini. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- motif. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/motif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Traditional_mud_cloth.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini#/media/File:Traditional_mud_cloth.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1024px-Bogolan_cloth_in_market_of_End%C3%A9%2C_Mali.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini#/media/File:Bogolan_cloth_in_market_of_End%C3%A9,_Mali.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- BamumMaleFigure. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BamumMaleFigure.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bamum kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamum_kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cameroon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameroon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- indigo. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/indigo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//physics/definition/pit. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Traditional_mud_cloth.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini#/media/File:Traditional_mud_cloth.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1024px-Bogolan_cloth_in_market_of_End%C3%A9%2C_Mali.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini#/media/File:Bogolan_cloth_in_market_of_End%C3%A9,_Mali.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- BamumMaleFigure. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BamumMaleFigure.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Kente cloth. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Kente_cloth. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Asante royal thrones. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Asante_royal_thrones. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashanti people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashanti_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Asante royal thrones. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Asante_royal_thrones. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Culture of Ivory Coast. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Ivory_Coast%23Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Empire of Ashanti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_Ashanti. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Akan art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Akan_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- replica. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/replica. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- crescent. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/crescent. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Traditional_mud_cloth.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini#/media/File:Traditional_mud_cloth.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 1024px-Bogolan_cloth_in_market_of_End%C3%A9%2C_Mali.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%B2g%C3%B2lanfini#/media/File:Bogolan_cloth_in_market_of_End%C3%A9,_Mali.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- BamumMaleFigure. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BamumMaleFigure.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Kent wove. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kent_wove.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 27.2: African Clothmaking is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

27.3: Other African Art

The Benin Bronzes

The Benin Bronzes are a collection of more than 3,000 brass plaques from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, located in present-day Nigeria.

Learning Objectives

Explain the distinguishing characteristics of the Benin Bronzes

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Benin Bronzes are a collection of more than 3,000 brass plaques from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, located in present-day Nigeria.
- The bronzes were seized by a British force in the Punitive Expedition of 1897 and given to the British Foreign Office.
- Bronzes are believed to have been cast in Benin since the 13th century, with many from the collection dating from the 15th and 16th centuries.
- The metal pieces were made using lost-wax casting and are considered among the best sculptures made using this technique. The Bronzes depict a variety of images, including animals, fish, humans, and scenes of court life. They were cast in matching pairs, although each was individually made.
- Bronze and ivory objects had a variety of functions in the ritual and courtly life of the Kingdom of Benin; they were used principally to decorate the royal palace and glorify the Oba, or King.

Key Terms

- **lost-wax casting**: The process by which a duplicate metal sculpture (often silver, gold, brass, or bronze) is created from an original sculpture; dependent on the sculptor's skills, intricate works can be achieved by this method.
- **Punitive Expedition of 1897**: A military journey undertaken by the United Kingdom (with a force of 1,200) to retaliate against Benin City after a previous defeat of a British-led invasion; British troops captured, burned, and looted Benin City, bringing to an end the west African Kingdom of Benin and relocating most of the country's art, including the Benin Bronzes, to Britain.
- **manillas**: Penannular armlets, mostly in bronze, copper, or gold, which served as a form of money or barter coinage among certain West African peoples.
- **Oba**: The title of a king in Benin.

Overview: The Benin Bronzes

The Benin Bronzes are a collection of more than 3,000 brass plaques and sculptures from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, located in present-day Nigeria. Collectively, the plaques form the best known examples of Benin art created by the Edo people from the 13th century; other forms of Benin art consist of additional sculptures in brass or bronze, including some famous portrait heads and smaller pieces.

History and Seizure of the Bronzes

Bronzes are believed to have been cast in Benin since the 13th century, and some of the Benin Bronzes in the collection date from the 15th and 16th centuries. Today, it is clear that the bronzes were made in Benin from an indigenous culture, centuries before contact with Portuguese traders. It is believed that two "golden ages" in Benin metal workmanship occurred during the reigns of Esigie (1550) and of Eresoyen (1735–50), when their workmanship achieved its highest qualities.

At the end of the 19th century, most of the plaques and other objects were removed by the British during the Punitive Expedition of 1897 as imperial control was being consolidated in Southern Nigeria. Two hundred of the pieces were taken to the British Museum in London, while the rest were purchased by other European museums. Today, a large number are held by the British Museum. Other notable collections are in Germany and the United States. In 1936, Oba Akenzua II, the traditional leader of the Edo people

in Nigeria, began a movement to return the art to its proper place in Nigeria; however, only two of the 3,000 bronzes were returned by the end of his reign in 1978. Nigeria has since bought around 50 Bronzes from the British Museum and has repeatedly called for the return of the remainder.

Production and Style

While the collection is known as the Benin Bronzes, like most West African “bronzes,” the pieces are mostly made of brass of variable composition. There are also pieces made of wood, ceramic, ivory, and mixtures of bronze and brass, among other materials. The metal pieces were made using lost-wax casting and are considered among the best sculptures made using this technique.

The lost-wax method: Modern-day view of bronze casting using the lost-wax method. The molten metal is poured into the mold.

The Bronzes depict a variety of images, including animals, fish, humans, and scenes of court life. Some of the reliefs represent important battles of the 16th century wars of expansion; however, the majority depict noble dignitaries wearing splendid ceremonial dress. Most of the plaques portray static figures either alone, in pairs, or in small groups arranged hierarchically around a central figure. They were cast in matching pairs, although each was individually made. The bronzes are more naturalistic than most African art of the period, and the surfaces are designed to highlight contrasts between light and metal. The features of many of the heads are exaggerated from natural proportions, with large ears, noses, and lips, which are shaped with great care. The most notable aspect of the works is the high level of the great metal-working skill at lost-wax casting.

Benin bronzes: Two Benin bronzes in London's Victoria and Albert Museum

Function and Importance

Bronze and ivory objects had a variety of functions in the ritual and courtly life of the Kingdom of Benin. They were used principally to decorate the royal palace, which contained many bronze works; many were hung on the pillars of the palace by nails punched directly through them. As a courtly art, their principal objective was to glorify the Oba—the divine king—and the history of his imperial power or to honor the queen mother. Art in the Kingdom of Benin took many forms, of which bronze and brass reliefs and the heads of kings and queen mothers are the best known. Bronze receptacles, bells, ornaments, jewelry, and ritual objects also possessed aesthetic qualities and originality, demonstrating the skills of their makers, although they are often eclipsed by figurative works in bronze and ivory carvings.

An important aspect of the works is their exclusivity: property was reserved only for certain social classes, reflecting the strict hierarchical structure of society in the Kingdom of Benin. In general, only the king could own objects made of bronze and ivory; however, he could allow high-ranking individuals to use such items, such as hanging masks and cuffs made of bronze and ivory.

Benin brass plaque: The Oba of Benin with attendants and Europeans.

Art of the Igbo

The Igbo people are well known for their music, dance, traditional masks, and Mbari architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the instruments and masks of Igbo performing arts and the origins of the Igbo language and ideogaphic script

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Igbo people have a musical style into which they incorporate various percussion instruments, such as the udu, the ekwe, and the ogene.
- Masking is one of the most common art styles in Igboland and is linked strongly with Igbo traditional music. A mask can be made of wood or fabric, along with other materials including iron and vegetation.
- Igbo art is generally known for various types of masquerade, masks, and clothing symbolizing people, animals, or abstract conceptions.
- Igbo art is also famous for Mbari architecture, in which large, opened-sided, square planned shelters house many life-sized, painted figures that are sculpted in mud, often to appease a deity.
- One of the unique structures of Igbo culture is the Nsude Pyramids, a group of ten pyramidal structures built out of clay and mud that served as temples for the god Ala/Uto, who was believed to reside at the top.

Key Terms

- **Uli**: The name given to the traditional designs drawn by the Igbo people of Nigeria; the drawings are strongly linear and do not have deep perspective, but they balance positive and negative space; designs are frequently asymmetrical and are often painted spontaneously.
- **satire**: A literary technique of writing or art that principally ridicules its subject often as an intended means of provoking or preventing change; humor is often used to aid this.

Background: Igbo Culture

Igbo culture includes the various customs, practices, and traditions of the indigenous Igbo people of southern Nigeria. It comprises archaic practices as well as new traditions introduced to the Igbo culture either through evolution or outside influences. These customs and traditions include the Igbo people's visual art, music, and dance forms, as well as their attire, cuisine, and language dialects. Because of their various subgroups, the variety of their culture is further heightened.

Performing Arts

The Igbo people have a musical style into which they incorporate various percussion instruments: the *udu*, which is essentially designed from a clay jug; an *ekwe*, which is formed from a hollowed log; and the *ogene*, a hand bell designed from forged iron. Other instruments include the *opi* (a wind instrument similar to the flute), *igba*, and *ichaka*. A widely popular musical form among the Igbo and throughout West Africa is Highlife, a fusion of jazz and traditional music. The modern Igbo Highlife is seen in the works of Dr. Sir Warrior, Oliver De Coque, Bright Chimezie, and Chief Osita Osadebe, who were among the most popular Igbo Highlife musicians of the 20th century.

Visual Arts

It is almost impossible to describe a general Igbo art style due to the heavy fragmentation of the Igbo people. This has added to the development of a great variety of art styles and cultural practices. Igbo art is generally known for various types of masquerades, masks, and clothing symbolizing people, animals, or abstract conceptions.

Bronze Castings

Bronze castings found in the town of Igbo Ukwu from the 9th century constitute the earliest sculptures discovered in Igboland. Here, the grave of a well-established man of distinction and a ritual store, dating from the 9th century CE, contained both chased copper objects and elaborate castings of leaded bronze. Along with these bronzes were 165,000 glass beads said to have originated in Egypt, Venice, and India. Some popular Igbo art styles include Uli designs.

Igbo bronzes: Bronze from the 9th century town of Igbo Ukwu, now at the British Museum.

Masks

Masking is one of the most common art styles in Igboland and is linked strongly with Igbo traditional music. A mask can be made of wood or fabric, along with other materials, including iron and vegetation. Masks have a wide variety of uses, mainly in social satires, religious rituals, secret society initiations (such as the Ekpe society), and public festivals, which now include Christmas celebrations. Best known are the Agbogho Mmuo (meaning “maiden spirit”) masks of the Northern Igbo, which represent the spirits of deceased maidens and their mothers, symbolizing beauty.

Igbo wooden complex: Igbo Wooden Complex, currently in the British Museum.

Architecture

Mbari Houses

Igbo art is also famous for Mbari architecture. Mbari houses of the Owerri-Igbo are large, opened-sided, square planned shelters. They house many life-sized, painted figures (sculpted in mud to appease the Alusi, a deity, and Ala, the earth goddess, with other deities of thunder and water). Other sculptures are of officials, craftsmen, foreigners (mainly Europeans), animals, legendary creatures, and ancestors. Mbari houses take years to build in what is regarded as a sacred process. When new ones are constructed, old ones are left to decay. Everyday houses were made of mud and thatched roofs with bare earth floors and carved design doors. Some houses had elaborate designs both in the interior and exterior, including Uli art designed by Igbo women.

Nsude Pyramids

One of the unique structures of Igbo culture was the Nsude Pyramids, at the town of Nsude, in Abaja, northern Igboland. Ten pyramidal structures were built out of clay and mud. The first base section was 60 feet in circumference and 3 feet in height; the next stack was 45 feet in circumference. Circular stacks continue until they reached the top. The structures were laid in groups of five parallel to each other and served as temples for the god Ala/Uto, who was believed to reside at the top of the pyramids. Because they were built of clay and mud, time has taken its toll on the monuments, requiring periodic reconstruction.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Benin Expedition of 1897. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin_Expedition_of_1897. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/oba. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Benin Bronzes. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin_Bronzes. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- manillas. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/manillas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-Benin_Bronzes.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_Bronzes.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Born_bronze_-_Bronze_casts.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Born_bronze_-_Bronze_casts.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Benin brass plaque 01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_brass_plaque_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Uli (design). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Uli_(design). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people%23Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- satire. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/satire. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1024px-Benin_Bronzes.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_Bronzes.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 800px-Born_bronze_-_Bronze_casts.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Born_bronze_-_Bronze_casts.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Benin brass plaque 01. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_brass_plaque_01.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo wooden complex. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Igbo_wooden_complex.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo_ukwu_bronzes.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people#/media/File:Igbo_ukwu_bronzes.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 27.3: Other African Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

27.4: Contemporary Art

Effects of Colonialism on Nigerian Art

The art of Nigeria was greatly impacted by colonialism, and the importance of European techniques and training grew during this period.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the cultural impact colonialism had on art in Nigeria

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The modern state of Nigeria originated from British colonial rule, beginning in the 19th century and the merging of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1914.
- This era of European colonization had a tremendous impact on the art and culture of Nigeria.
- Aina Onabolu (1882–1963) was a pioneering Nigerian modern arts teacher and painter who was an important figure in the introduction of arts into the curriculum of secondary schools in the country.
- Onabolu was also the major figure in Nigeria that promoted the drawing of environmental forms using European techniques and was known for his early modern work in portraiture.
- During this era, Eurocentric beliefs and worldviews made it so that it was often considered important, even essential, for African artists to receive training in Europe in order to prove their merit.
- At the same time, in the early 20th century, African artwork was being brought back to Europe where it influenced and inspired the work of many European artists, including Pablo Picasso ‘s so-called “African Period.”

Key Terms

- **verisimilitudinous**: In a style reflecting the philosophical concept that distinguishes between the relative and apparent (or seemingly so) truth and falsity of assertions and hypotheses.

Background: Colonialism in Nigeria

The modern state of Nigeria originated from British colonial rule, beginning in the 19th century, and the merging of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1914. The British set up administrative and legal structures while practicing indirect rule through traditional chiefdoms. Nigeria did not become a formally independent federation until 1960. This era of colonization had a tremendous impact on the art and culture of Nigeria.

The Introduction of European Art Styles

Aina Onabolu

Aina Onabolu (1882–1963) was a pioneering Nigerian modern arts teacher and painter who was an important figure in the introduction of arts into the curriculum of secondary schools in the country. He was also the major figure in Nigeria that promoted the drawing of environmental forms in a verisimilitudinous style and was known for his early modern work in portraiture.

When the colonial government in Nigeria took control of formal education in 1909, the curriculum in the schools was geared toward the provision of suitable education to train clerks for the colonial administration. Little was thought of arts education in secondary schools until a report recommended the teaching of native indigenous hand craft. Prior to the report, Onabolu had formally presented requests for the introduction of modern arts education in secondary schools, but his option was rejected by the colonial education officers.

Onabolu returned from London and Paris in 1922, where he had acquired knowledge of European painting techniques and the characteristics of European art education. Around this same time, a new perspective on introducing indigenous art education in the country was emerging. Onabolu began teaching in a few top schools in Lagos such as King’s College and CMS Grammar School. His themes dealt primarily with the science of perspective, human proportions, drawing, and watercolor painting. During this era,

Eurocentric beliefs and worldviews made it so that it was often considered important, and even essential, for African artists to receive training in Europe in order to prove their merit.

Re-emergence of Traditional Arts

Onabolu also encouraged the adoption of European teachers in art instruction in the country. His effort led to the hiring of a foreign art teacher named Kenneth Murray, who led a gradual re-awakening of traditional handicraft and arts. The new approach of promoting indigenous African arts and staying within the native repository of knowledge was introduced into the curriculum of various secondary schools in the country. The efforts of the new instructor yielded early dividends, as the number of Nigerian art instructors increased, and knowledge of traditional works became more pronounced. However, Murray's effort meant little in the long run as the country was increasingly westernized by its colonial rulers.

Nigeria's Influence on European Art

In the early 20th century, African artwork, including that from Nigeria, was being brought back to European museums as colonists were expanding through sub-Saharan Africa. In a growing climate of interest in Africa, artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse began to look toward African artwork as inspiration for some of their work. Picasso's so-called "African Period," which lasted from 1906 to 1909, was the period in which he painted in a style that was strongly influenced by African sculpture and particularly traditional African masks. This proto-Cubist period following Picasso's Blue Period and Rose Period has also been called the Black Period.

In May or June 1907, Picasso experienced a "revelation" while viewing African art at the ethnographic museum at Palais du Trocadéro. Picasso's exposure to African art influenced the style of his painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (begun in May 1907 and reworked in July of that year), especially in the treatment of the two figures on the right side of the composition. Although *Les Demoiselles* is seen as a proto-Cubist work, Picasso continued to develop a style derived from African art before beginning the analytic cubism phase of his painting in 1910. Other works of Picasso's African Period include the *Bust of a Woman* (1907), *Mother and Child* (1907), *Nude with Raised Arms* (1907), and *Three Women* (1908).

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907 by Picasso: The two figures on the right are the beginnings of Picasso's African period.

Nigerian Art Post-Independence

Art in Nigeria post-independence has been characterized by a continued fusion of European and traditional Nigerian arts, along with a movement to break away from European styles.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the societal trends seen in Nigerian art produced after independence

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Nigeria became a formally independent federation in 1960; it has since alternated between democratically elected civilian governments and military dictatorships, until it achieved a stable democracy in 1999.
- Art in Nigeria post-independence has been characterized by a movement to break away from European styles and embrace purely traditional styles once more, as seen in the works of Enwonwu and Okeke and the emergence of the Négritude Movement.
- Odinigwe Benedict Chukwukadibia Enwonwu (1917–1994) was a premier Igbo Nigerian modernist painter, sculptor, and pioneer whose career opened the way for the postcolonial proliferation and increased visibility of modern African art.
- Christopher Uchefuna Okeke (1933—2016), known as Uche Okeke, was another important and influential contemporary Nigerian artist.
- The Négritude Movement is an artistic, literary, and ideological philosophy developed by french-speaking African intellectuals, writers, and politicians during the 1930s.
- The initiators of the movement disapproved of European colonialism and claimed that the best strategy to oppose it was to encourage a common racial identity for black Africans worldwide.

Key Terms

- **francophone**: French-speaking.

Background: Independent Nigeria

The modern state of Nigeria originated from British colonial rule, beginning in the 19th century, and from the merging of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1914. The British set up administrative and legal structures while practicing indirect rule through traditional chiefdoms. Nigeria became a formally independent federation in 1960 and plunged into a civil war from 1967 to 1970. It has since alternated between democratically elected civilian governments and military dictatorships, until it achieved a stable democracy in 1999.

Art in Nigeria post-independence has been characterized by a continued fusion of European and traditional Nigerian arts, along with a movement to break away from European styles and embrace purely traditional styles once more, as seen in the works of Enwonwu and Okeke and the emergence of the Négritude Movement.

Enwonwu

Odinigwe Benedict Chukwukadibia Enwonwu (1917–1994), better known in the western world as Ben Enwonwu, was a premier Igbo Nigerian modernist painter, sculptor, and pioneer. His career opened the way for the post-colonial proliferation and increased visibility of modern African art, especially that of Nigeria. His work has been exhibited around the world.

During his time, Enwonwu was well regarded as an artist, and his art is described as a “unique form of African modernism.” Enwonwu studied Fine Arts under Kenneth C. Murray at Government Colleges, Ibadan and Umuahia, 1934–1937. Murray was an education officer in charge of art education in the colonial civil service and later director of antiquities. Enwonwu attended Goldsmith College, London, in 1944, and then continued his studies at Ruskin College, Oxford, England, from 1944 to 1946, and at Ashmolean College and Slade School of Fine Arts, Oxford, 1946–48, graduating with first-class honors. During their time together, Enwonwu became Murray’s assistant and was recognized as one of the most gifted and technically proficient students of the “Murray Group.”

His career teaching art, touring, and lecturing spanned the next several decades, all while he held many art exhibitions in London, Lagos, Milan, New York, Washington D.C., and Boston. During her visit to Nigeria in 1956, Queen Elizabeth II commissioned and sat for a portrait sculpture by the artist. During the Royal Society of British Artists exhibition in London of 1957, he unveiled the bronze sculpture. Recognition of his bronze sculpture of the Queen proved that he, as an African modern artist, used his practice to develop a new kind of modern art whose ideals of representation and notions of artistic identity were different from conventional art-historical narratives of European modernist practice.

Okeke

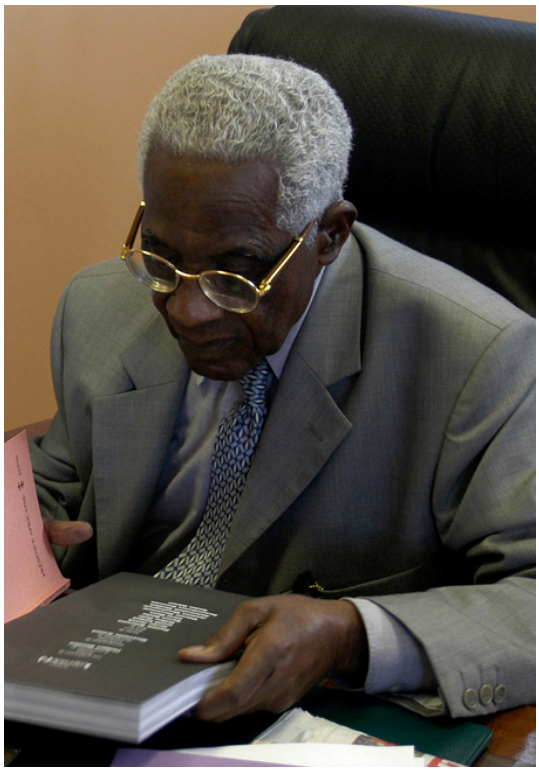
Christopher Uchefuna Okeke (1933–2016), known as Uche Okeke, was a contemporary Nigerian artist. Between 1940 and 1953, he attended St. Peter Claver's (Primary) School, Kafanchan, Metropolitan College, Onitsha, and Bishop Shanahan College, Orlu, during which time he had already begun to demonstrate an avid interest in drawing and painting. Before being admitted to the Fine Arts program at Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology in 1958, Okeke—together with Yusuf Grillo, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Demas Nwoko, and others—inaugurated the Zaria Art Society. In that same year, he opened a cultural center in Kafanchan that later became the Asele Institute, Nimo, which hosted many cultural activities.

In the early 1970s, Okeke was appointed lecturer and acting head of the Fine Arts Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he introduced many new courses into the Igbo Uli art tradition. In 1973, he also designed the first course program of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, and initiated postgraduate courses in the Department of Fine Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The Négritude Movement

Négritude is an artistic, literary, and ideological philosophy developed by francophone African intellectuals, writers, and politicians in France during the 1930s. Its initiators included Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor (a future President of Senegal), and Léon Damas of French Guiana. Négritude intellectuals disapproved of French colonialism and claimed that the best strategy to oppose it was to encourage a common racial identity for black Africans worldwide. They included the Marxist ideas they favored as part of this philosophy. The writers generally used a realist literary style, and some say they were also influenced somewhat by the Surrealism style; in 1932, their manifesto "Murderous Humanitarianism" was signed by prominent Surrealists including the Martiniquans Pierre Yoyotte and J. M. Monnerot.

The term négritude was meant to be provocative, as it took its roots from a word that was used exclusively in a racist context within France. Negritude sought to re-claim and appropriate the word. The term was first used in its present sense by Césaire, in the third issue of *L'Étudiant noir*, a magazine he had started in Paris with fellow students Léopold Senghor and Léon Damas, as well as Gilbert Gratiant, Leonard Sainville, Louis T. Achille, Aristide Maugée, and Paulette Nardal. *L'Étudiant noir* also includes Césaire's first published work, *Conscience Raciale et Révolution Sociale* with the heading "Les Idées" and the rubric "Négreries," which is notable for its disavowal of assimilation as a valid strategy for resistance and for its use of the word *nègre* as a positive term. The problem with assimilation, Césaire argued, was that one assimilated into a culture that considered African culture to be barbaric and unworthy of being seen as "civilized." The assimilation into this culture would have been seen as an implicit acceptance of this view. Nègre previously had been used mainly in a pejorative sense, but Césaire deliberately incorporated this derogatory word into the name of his philosophy.



Aimé Césaire, 2003: Aimé Césaire reading the cover of a book in 2003.

Contemporary African Art

The countries throughout Africa are home to many diverse and thriving contemporary arts cultures.

Learning Objectives

Identify the leading artists, styles, and exhibitions of contemporary African art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Contemporary African art was pioneered in the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa by artists like Irma Stern, Cyril Fradan, and Walter Battiss and through galleries such as the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg.
- Many contemporary African artists are represented in museum collections, and their art may sell for high prices at art auctions. Despite this, many contemporary African artists tend to have difficult times finding a market for their work.
- Many contemporary African arts borrow heavily from traditional predecessors. Ironically, this emphasis on abstraction is seen by Westerners as an imitation of European and American cubist and totemic artists, which itself was influenced by traditional African art in the 20th century.
- A wide range of more traditional forms of art, or adaptations of traditional style to contemporary taste, are made for sale to tourists and others, including so-called “airport art.”

Key Terms

- **airport art**: Traditional forms of African art or adaptations of traditional style to contemporary taste made for sale to tourists.
- **Documenta 11**: An exhibition of modern and contemporary art that takes place every five years in Kassel, Germany; this particular iteration in 2002 was organized around themes such as migration, urbanization, and post-colonialism.

Overview

The countries throughout Africa are home to many thriving contemporary art cultures. This has been unfortunately understudied until recently, due to scholars' and art collectors' emphasis on traditional art from the region. Notable modern artists include El Anatsui, Marlene Dumas, William Kentridge, Karel Nel, Kendell Geers, Yinka Shonibare, Zerihun Yetmgeta, Odhiambo Siangla, Olu Oguibe, Lubaina Himid, Bili Bidjocka, and Henry Tayali. Art biennials are held in Dakar, Senegal, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Many contemporary African artists are represented in museum collections, and their art may sell for high prices at art auctions; however, other artists have difficult times finding a market for their work.

Development of Contemporary Art

Many contemporary African arts borrow heavily from traditional predecessors. Ironically, their emphasis on abstraction is seen by Westerners as an imitation of European and American cubist and totemic artists, such as Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, and Henri Matisse, who, in the early 20th century, were heavily influenced by traditional African art. This period was critical to the evolution of Western modernism in visual arts, symbolized by Picasso's breakthrough painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

Wood sculpture attributed to Zimbabwean artist Gideon Chidongo, late 20th century: Wood carving has a long history in Zimbabwe, and this contemporary art piece takes from this tradition.

Contemporary African art was pioneered in the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa by artists like Irma Stern, Cyril Fradan, and Walter Battiss and through galleries such as the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg. More recently, European galleries such as the October Gallery in London and collectors such as Jean Pigozzi, Artur Walther, and Gianni Baiocchi in Rome have helped expand the interest in the subject. Numerous exhibitions at the Museum for African Art in New York and the African Pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale, which showcased the Sindika Dokolo African Collection of Contemporary Art, have gone a long way to countering many of the myths and prejudices that haunt contemporary African art. When Okwui Enwezor from Nigeria was appointed as artistic director of the international exhibition Documenta 11, his African-centered vision of art propelled the careers of countless African artists onto the international stage.

A wide range of more traditional forms of art, or adaptations of traditional style to contemporary taste, are made for sale to tourists and others, including so-called “airport art.” A number of vigorous popular traditions assimilate Western influences into African

styles, such as the elaborate fantasy coffins in shapes such as airplanes, cars, or animals of West African cities and the banners of clubs.

Well-known Artists

Gilbert G. Groud

Gilbert G. Groud (born 1956) is a painter, illustrator, and author from Toulépleu, Côte d'Ivoire. Groud is active against the military use of children in his homeland Côte d'Ivoire and the world in general. He is working on the preparation of several exhibitions and writes a comic book about the topic of child soldiers to increase awareness. He has released one of the pictures of the exhibition on creative commons license in the hope that it will be used in ending the use of children in war.

Gilbert G. Groud, *Child soldier in the Ivory Coast*, 2007, mixed materials: tusche and wax crayon: Groud is active against the military use of children in his homeland Côte d'Ivoire.

El Anatsui

El Anatsui (born in 1944) is a Ghanaian sculptor active for much of his career in Nigeria. He has drawn particular international attention in recent years for his iconic "bottle-top installations," distinctive large-scale assemblages of thousands of pieces of aluminium sourced from alcohol recycling stations and sewn together with copper wire, transformed into metallic cloth-like wall sculptures in a way that links the themes of consumerism, waste, and the environment.

Man's Cloth by El Anatsui (1998–2001), on display at the British Museum: El Anatsui (born in 1944) is a Ghanaian sculptor who has drawn particular international attention in recent years for his iconic "bottle-top installations."

Yinka Shonibare

Yinka Shonibare (born 1962) is a British-Nigerian artist living in London. His work explores cultural identity, colonialism, and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalization. A hallmark of his art is the brightly colored fabric he uses. Having a physical disability that paralyzes one side of his body, Shonibare uses assistants to make works under his direction. Shonibare's work explores issues of colonialism alongside those of race and class, through a range of media including painting, sculpture, photography, installation art, and, more recently, film and performance. He examines, in particular, the construction of identity and the tangled interrelationship between Africa and Europe and their respective economic and political histories.

Yoruba Artwork in the transAfrican Context

Over the years, many Yoruban artists have merged foreign and contemporary influences with the traditional art forms found in West Africa.

Learning Objectives

Identify the traditional Yoruba references found in contemporary Trans-African style art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Yoruba people of South Western Africa have a rich and vibrant artisan community, creating both traditional and contemporary art.
- The traditional art forms among the Yoruba include beading, braiding, tattooing, clay molding and ceramic work, bronze casting, weaving and dyeing (such as the traditional adire indigo-dyed cloth), sculpting, and others.
- Over the years, many Yoruba artists have come to merge foreign ideas of artistry and contemporary art with the traditional art forms found in West Africa.
- The transAfrican style of art was manifest in the work of Jeff Donaldson, an African American visual artist whose work helped define the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.
- Many works within the transAfrican style of art are filled with references to Yoruba traditions and styles and are characterized by rhythmic use of lines, vibrant colors, bold patterns, motion, and often an emotional intensity.

Key Terms

- **yoruba**: An ethnic group of West Africa.
- **Ifá**: A religion and system of divination; refers to the verses of the literary corpus known as the Odu Ifá.
- **Black Arts Movement**: The artistic branch of the Black Power movement, started in Harlem by writer and activist Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones).

- **orisha**: A deity that reflects one of the manifestations of the Supreme Divinity (Eledumare, Olorun, Olofi) in Yoruba religion.
- **transAfrican**: Belonging to a style of work coined by Jeff Donaldson in the 1960s, aiming to synthesize an all-encompassing transnational aesthetic and unify the then-fragmented concept of black art.

Background

The Yoruba of South Western Africa (including the areas known today as Benin Republic, Nigeria, Togo, and parts of Ghana, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone) have a very rich and vibrant artisan community, creating both traditional and contemporary art. The custom of art and artisans among the Yoruba is deeply rooted in the Ifá literary corpus, indicating the orishas (or dieties) Ogun, Obatala, Oshun, and Obalufon as central to creation mythology, including artistry.

The traditional art forms among the Yoruba include beading, braiding, tattooing, clay molding and ceramic work, bronze casting, weaving and dyeing (such as the traditional adire indigo-dyed cloth), sculpting, and many other forms. There is also a vibrant form of customary theater known as *Alarinjo*, which has its roots in the medieval period and has given much to the contemporary Nigerian film industry. Over the years, many Yoruba artists have come to merge foreign ideas of artistry and contemporary art with the traditional art forms found in West Africa.

Yoruba art: Two painted wooden figures depicting Europeans in Africa and Yoruba people, West Nigeria; 1st half of 20th century.

The transAfrican Style in Yoruba Art

The transAfrican style of art was manifest in the work of Jeff Donaldson, an African American visual artist whose work helped define the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In the midst of the racial and cultural turmoil of the 1960s, a group of African-American artists endeavored to relate its artwork to the black masses. Aiming to use art for social impact, artists such as Jeff Donaldson strived to create an “art for the people:” an art form that was recognizable by and directed toward everyday people, rather than a group of well-educated elite. Within his works and collaborative efforts, Donaldson essentially became the founder of the new, uniting aesthetic known as transAfricanism. TransAfrican art is characterized by rhythmic use of lines, vibrant colors, bold patterns, motion, and often an emotional intensity. Much work made within the transAfrican style borrows heavily from Yoruba traditions.

One of his key works, *Victory in the Valley of Eshu* (1970), depicts an elderly black couple holding what appears to be an eye-shaped pinwheel. The work is filled with Yoruba and traditional African references, including the Yoruba Sango dance wand in the right hand of the man, references to deified ancestors (a Yoruba belief), the name Esu (the Yoruba god of fate), and others. The newly prominent element of shine, an aesthetic effect mimicking or displaying physical shine in order to reflect the bright, star-like quality of ordinary African Americans, is also visible in this piece. This effect achieves the celebration aspect of black art: an art that, as stated by Donaldson, defines, glorifies, and directs black people—an art for the people's sake.

The notion of shine is conveyed through the collection of small dots of color in the figures' hair and surrounding their bodies. Additionally, the hair of the couple seem to mimic halos. These elements, in combination with the couple's bright white clothing, complete the celebration of the ordinary in this African diasporic work. The little splotches and dots of color seem to emanate from the bodies and to dance their way around the edges of the portrait, conveying that notion of a rhythmic motion, which was integral in transAfrican work.

Domestic Architecture in Modern Africa

African architecture is exceptionally diverse from region to region and has had numerous external influences.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the influences of Baroque, Arab, Turkish, and Gujarati Indian architectural styles on traditional African architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Traditional African architecture uses a wide range of materials, including thatch, stick/wood, mud, mudbrick, rammed earth, and stone, with a preference for materials varying by region.
- During the early modern period, new and diverse influences such as Baroque, Arab, Turkish, and Gujarati Indian style began to be absorbed into African architecture.
- By the late 19th century, most buildings reflected the European preference for eclectic and mixed styles, taking from Mediterranean and northern European influence.
- The revival of interest in traditional styles can be traced back to the 19th and early 20th centuries, as colonial buildings began to mix European and vernacular African styles of architecture.
- Modern architecture expanded through the 1920s and 1930s, while today a great deal of domestic architecture reflects a fusion between modern and neo-vernacular styles.

Key Terms

- **eclectic**: Unrelated and unspecialized; heterogeneous.
- **vernacular architecture**: A category of architecture based on localized needs and construction materials, and reflecting local traditions.

Overview

The architecture of Africa, like that of any vast region or continent, is exceptionally diverse. Many ethno-linguistic groups throughout the history of Africa have had their own architectural traditions. As with most architectural traditions elsewhere, African architecture has been subject to numerous external influences from the earliest periods for which evidence is available. The Islamic conquest of North Africa saw the development of Islamic architecture in the region; western architecture has had an impact on coastal areas since the late 15th century, and is now an important source for many buildings, particularly in major cities.

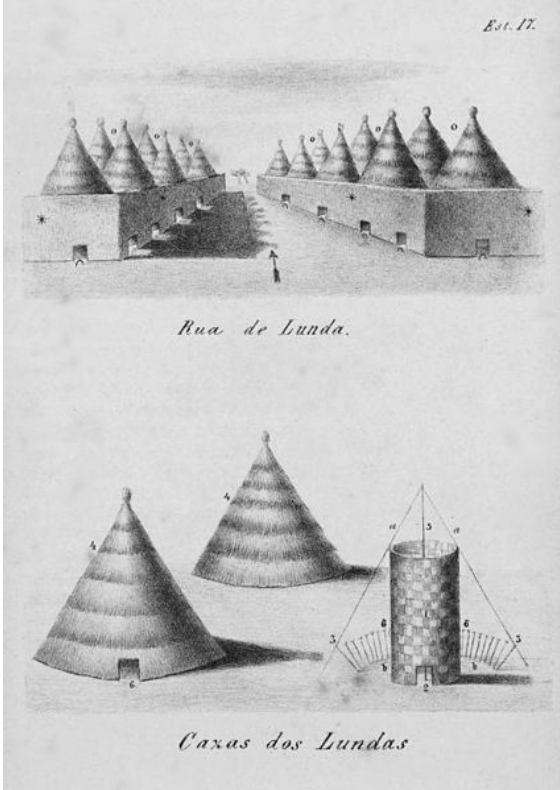
Common Characteristics

One common theme in a great deal of traditional African architecture is the use of fractal scaling: small parts of the structure tend to look similar to larger parts, such as a circular village made of circular houses. Vernacular architecture uses a wide range of materials, such as thatch, stick/wood, mud, mudbrick, rammed earth, and stone, with a preference for materials varying by region.

North Africa primarily used stone and rammed earth; West Africa tends toward mud and adobe; central Africa uses thatch, wood, and more perishable materials; southern Africa uses stone, thatch, and wood; and in East Africa the materials have varied.

Ten broad categories of traditional hut and house structures have been identified throughout Africa:

1. Domical (beehive)
2. Cone on cylinder
3. Cone on poles and mud cylinder
4. Gabled roofed
5. Pyramidal cone
6. Rectangle with roof rounded and sloping at ends
7. Square
8. Dome or flat roof on clay box
9. Quadrangular, surrounding an open courtyard
10. Cone on ground



Lunda street and houses: Lunda dwellings (from the Kingdom of Lunda, a pre-colonial African confederation of states in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, north-eastern Angola, and northwestern Zambia from c. 1665–1887) display the square and the cone-on-ground types of African vernacular architecture.

History

Early Modern Period

During the early modern period, the absorption of new diverse influences such as Baroque, Arab, Turkish, and Gujarati Indian styles began with the arrival of Portuguese Jesuit missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries. Castles were built by arriving colonizers as defensive fortresses during times of war. Early Europeans invaded and set up colonies around the West African coast, building large forts that can now be seen at Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle, Christiansborg, Fort Jesus, and elsewhere.

Under colonial rule, the tradition of building houses out of mud walls, thatched roofs, and other traditional materials decreased while the use of cement blocks and zinc roofs became more common. By the late 19th century, most buildings reflected the European preference for eclectic and mixed styles, taking from Mediterranean and northern European influence. Examples of

colonial towns from this era survive at Saint-Louis, Senegal, Grand-Bassam, and elsewhere. A few buildings were pre-fabricated in Europe and shipped over for erection. This European tradition continued well into the 20th century with the construction of European-style manor houses, such as Shiwa Ng'andu in what is now Zambia and the Boer homesteads in South Africa.

Shiwa Ng'andu, Zambia: Main house on the estate at Shiwa Ng'andu in Zambia, built by Stewart Gore-Browne.

The revival of interest in traditional styles can be traced to Cairo in the early 19th century. Afterward, it spread to Algiers and Morocco by the early 20th century, and soon colonial buildings across the continent began to mix European and traditional African styles of architecture.

Modern Architecture

The impact of modern architecture began to be felt in the 1920s and 1930s. Le Corbusier (Algeria), Steffen Ahrens (South Africa), and Ernst May (Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya) were influential architects at the time. Villages in Libya and Italian East Africa began to incorporate modern Italian designs.

A number of new cities were built following the end of colonialism, while others were greatly expanded. In the city of Abidjan, the majority of buildings were still designed by high-profile non-African architects. Experimental designs have also appeared, most notably the Eastgate Centre, Harare in Zimbabwe. With an advanced form of natural air conditioning, this building was designed to respond precisely to Harare's climate and needs, rather than import less suitable designs. Neo-vernacular architecture (or new forms of vernacular architecture) continues, for instance, with the Great Mosques of Nioro or New Gourna.

Eastgate Centre, Harare, Zimbabwe: The pink-hued Eastgate Centre, with its distinctive chimneys.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Picasso's African Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso%27s_African_Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nigeria. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria#Culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aina Onabolu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aina_Onabolu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Verisimilitude. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Verisimilitude. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso%27s_African_Period#/media/File:Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ben Enwonwu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Enwonwu. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Uche Okeke. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Uche_Okeke. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nu00e9gritude. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%A9gritude. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso%27s_African_Period#/media/File:Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aim%C3%A9_C%C3%A9saire#/media/File:Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gilbert G. Groud. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_G._Groud. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- El Anatsui. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Anatsui. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yinka Shonibare. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yinka_Shonibare. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Documenta. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Documenta. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- airport art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/airport%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso%27s_African_Period#/media/File:Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aim%C3%A9_C%C3%A9saire#/media/File:Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Child-soldier-afrika. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Child-soldier-afrika.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chidongo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chidongo.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-El_Anatsui_-_Man%27s_Cloth.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Anatsui#/media/File:El_Anatsui_-_Man%27s_Cloth.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yoruba people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people%23Society_and_culture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yoruba traditional art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_traditional_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jeff Donaldson (artist). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Donaldson_(artist)%23The_TransAfrican_Style_in_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jeff Donaldson (artist). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Donaldson_(artist)%23The_TransAfrican_Style_in_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-*

ShareAlike

- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/transafrican. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- yoruba. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/yoruba. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso%27s_African_Period#/media/File:Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aim%C3%A9_C%C3%A9saire#/media/File:Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Child-soldier-afrika. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Child-soldier-afrika.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chidongo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chidongo.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-El_Anatsui_-_Man%27s_Cloth.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Anatsui#/media/File:El_Anatsui_-_Man%27s_Cloth.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yoruba art European 2 Tropenmuseum. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yoruba_art_European_2_Tropenmuseum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- African architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- African architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Igbo people. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- eclectic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/eclectic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- vernacular architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/vernacular%20architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 800px-Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso%27s_African_Period#/media/File:Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Aim%C3%A9_C%C3%A9saire#/media/File:Aime_Cesaire_2003.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Child-soldier-afrika. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Child-soldier-afrika.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chidongo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chidongo.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 1280px-El_Anatsui_-_Man%27s_Cloth.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Anatsui#/media/File:El_Anatsui_-_Man%27s_Cloth.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Yoruba art European 2 Tropenmuseum. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yoruba_art_European_2_Tropenmuseum.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- HouseatShiwaNgandu. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HouseatShiwaNgandu.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lunda houses-1854. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lunda_houses-1854.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Eastgate Centre, Harare, Zimbabwe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eastgate_Centre,_Harare,_Zimbabwe.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 27.4: Contemporary Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

28: European and American Art in the 18th and 19th Centuries

28.1: The Enlightenment
28.2: Rococo
28.3: Neoclassicism
28.4: Neoclassicism and Romanticism
28.5: The Gothic Revival
28.6: The Empire Style
28.7: Academic Art
28.8: Realism
28.9: Impressionism
28.10: The Rise of Modernism
28.11: The Beginning of Modern Architecture
28.12: Photography

This page titled 28: European and American Art in the 18th and 19th Centuries is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.1: The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment

Neoclassicism was the dominant artistic style of the Enlightenment period and drew inspiration from the classical art and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Learning Objectives

Describe the shifts in thinking and artwork that characterized the Enlightenment

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- European Neoclassicism in the visual arts began c. 1760 in opposition to the decadence of Baroque and Rococo styles.
- The austerity and sobriety of Neoclassicism echoed the spirit of the French Revolution.
- The French painter Nicholas Poussin was a master of the Neoclassical style.
- Neoclassicism was especially strong in those areas where classical examples were most abundant, such as in architecture and sculpture. Painting, in contrast, had fewer classical antecedents to reference.

Key Terms

- **Neoclassicism**: Neoclassicism is the name given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theater, music, and architecture that draw inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome.
- **Rococo**: Rococo, also referred to as Late Baroque, is an 18th-century artistic movement and style, which affected several aspects of the arts, including painting, sculpture, architecture, interior design, decoration, literature, music, and theater.
- **Enlightenment**: A philosophical movement in 17th and 18th century Europe; the Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, emphasized rationalism.

Overview

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was a movement that began during the 18th century in Europe and the American colonies. The key figures of the movement sought to reform society using the power of reason. Started by the preeminent philosophers of the day, the Enlightenment era lasted from about 1650 to 1800, promoting science, reason, and intellectual exchange. The idea of advancing knowledge through reason emerged in response to new technology and the ability to exchange information easily thanks to mass printing, and also out of a backlash against previous systems, which valued the church and tradition above all else. The authority of science and empirical thought increasingly displaced religious authority, and the disciplines of alchemy and astrology lost credibility, leaving the more easily confirmed chemistry and astronomy. Scientific thought became more and more developed. The Enlightenment has long been hailed as the foundation of modern Western political and intellectual culture.

The Enlightenment encouraged criticism of the corruption of Louis XVI and the aristocracy in France, leading to the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789. In 1792, Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette, were beheaded along with thousands of other aristocrats believed to be loyal to the monarchy.

Art During the Enlightenment

Previous to the Enlightenment, the dominant artistic style was Rococo. When the Enlightenment and its new ideals took hold, Rococo was condemned for being immoral, indecent, and indulgent, and a new kind of instructive art was called for, which became known as Neoclassicism. In opposition to the frivolous sensuality of Rococo painters like Jean-Honoré Fragonard and François Boucher, the Neoclassicists looked to the artist Nicolas Poussin for their inspiration. Poussin's work favors line over color and predominantly features clarity, logic, and order. His work served as an alternative to the dominant Baroque style of the 17th century. Poussin was the major inspiration for such classically oriented artists as Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Paul Cézanne.

Et in Arcadia Ergo by Nicholas Poussin, c. 1630s: Poussin came to define Neoclassical artwork with work that favored line over color and a rather stark lack of frivolity.

The Neoclassical Style

Neoclassicism is characterized by clarity of form, sober colors, shallow space, and strong horizontals. Its verticals render the subject matter timeless, instead of temporal, as in the dynamic Baroque works, and depicts classical subject matter—or classicizes contemporary subject matter. Neoclassicists believed that strong drawing was rational, and therefore morally superior, and that art should be cerebral, not sensual.

The Neoclassicists wanted to express rationality and sobriety that was fitting for their times. Artists like David supported the rebels in the French Revolution through an art that asked for clear-headed thinking, self-sacrifice to the State (as in Oath of the Horatii), and an austerity reminiscent of Republican Rome.

Oath of the Horatii by Jacques-Louis David, 1784: David was an extremely influential figure in the Neoclassical movement. His strong use of line, balance, and geometry suited the movement's ideals of order and austerity.

Neoclassicism was strongest in architecture, sculpture, and the decorative arts, where classical models in the same medium were relatively numerous and accessible. Rococo architecture emphasizes grace, ornamentation, and asymmetry; Neoclassical architecture is based on the principles of simplicity and symmetry, which were seen as virtues in the arts of Rome and Ancient Greece, and were more immediately drawn from 16th century Renaissance Classicism.

The Grand Tour and Its Portraits

The Grand Tour was a customary trip to Europe undertaken by wealthy Europeans and some Americans.

Learning Objectives

Describe the stops along the Grand Tour in Europe

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Grand Tour was viewed as an educational rite of passage typically for young men, but sometimes women as well.
- The Grand Tour tradition was extended to include the middle class when railroad and ship travel became more widespread in the second half of the 18th century.
- The Grand Tour generally involved the study of art at museums and universities, private collections, and notable architectural sites.
- Souvenirs and mementos became an important element as they could demonstrate the specifics of which location was visited and what was seen or acquired.
- The artist Pompeo Batoni made a career of painting portraits of English tourists posed among Roman antiquities and became very popular in Rome.
- Batoni's paintings made it into numerous private collections in Britain, thus ensuring the genre 's popularity in the United Kingdom.

Key Terms

- **rite of passage**: A ceremony or series of ceremonies, often very ritualized, to celebrate a transition in a person's life. Baptisms, bar mitzvahs, weddings, and funerals are among the best known examples.

The Grand Tour was a customary trip to Europe undertaken by wealthy Europeans and some Americans that flourished as a tradition from about 1660 to 1840. The trip was viewed as an educational rite of passage typically for young men, but sometimes women as well. It was intended as a means of cultural broadening and associated with a fairly standard itinerary. The Grand Tour tradition was extended to include the middle class when railroad and ship travel became more widespread in the second half of the 18th century.

The travel itinerary typically began in Dover, England and crossed the English Channel to Ostend or to Calais in France. From here the tourist and "bear-leader," or tutor, and possibly a troupe of servants, could rent a coach and travel to Paris. From Paris they would travel to Switzerland, then Spain, and Northern Italy. Once in Italy, the tourist would visit Turin, and might spend a few months in Florence and Venice, which was the epitome of the Grand Tour for most British tourists. From Venice they would go to Rome to study the ruins and masterpieces and possibly to the archaeological sites at Pompeii. Next was the German section of Europe, such as Vienna, Dresden, Berlin, and Potsdam, and finally to Holland and Flanders before making the trip home. The journey generally involved the study of art at museums and universities, private collections, and notable architectural sites.

The pilgrimage was popularized further by the advent of tour guides, such as Thomas Cook, which became synonymous with the Grand Tour. Grand Tourists were known to travel with an entourage that included valets, coachmen, scholarly guide and possibly a cook. Souvenirs and mementos became an important element as they could demonstrate the specifics of which location was visited and what was seen or acquired. Their popularity created an industry of sorts, and prices rose with the growth of the trend. Some Grand Tourists invited artists from home to accompany them throughout their travels, painting views specific to their personal itineraries.

Despite the political upheaval, 18th century Rome remained a desirable destination. It became an absolute necessity for people of means to spend time in Rome as part of their "Grand Tour," or educational pilgrimage. The city became a nexus for these tourists as well as the merchants and industries that resulted from their patronage.

The increasing popularity of the Grand Tour, and the related desire for visitors to collect "classical" souvenirs, quickly spread the Neoclassical style throughout Europe. It became a symbol of wealth and freedom to go on the Grand Tour and to have something to

show for it displayed in your home. A popular souvenir of the Grand Tour was a portrait of the tourists themselves, often painted amidst the architecture, or famous art works of a particular European location. The artist Pompeo Batoni, made a career of painting portraits of English tourists posed among Roman antiquities. He became very popular in Rome and his portraits of the British traveling through the city were in very high demand. There are records of over 200 portraits of visiting British patrons standing amidst ruins and great works of art by Batoni. These paintings made it into numerous private collections in Britain, thus ensuring the genre's popularity in the United Kingdom.

A portrait by Pompeo Batoni: A popular souvenir of the Grand Tour was a portrait of the tourists themselves, like this one, painted amidst the architecture or famous art works of a particular European location.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Oath of the Horatii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_the_Horatii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Et in Arcadia ego. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Et_in_Arcadia_ego. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ARTH111: Introduction to Western Art History - Proto-Renaissance to Contemporary Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: https://legacy.saylor.org/arth111/Intro/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ARTH111: Introduction to Western Art History - Proto-Renaissance to Contemporary Art. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: https://legacy.saylor.org/arth111/Intro/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Nicolas Poussin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Poussin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Enlightenment. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Enlightenment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Oath of the Horatii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_the_Horatii. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nicolas Poussin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Poussin. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ARTH207: Baroque Art to Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: https://legacy.saylor.org/arth207/Intro/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Pompeo Batoni. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeo_Batoni. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grand Tour. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Tour. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- rite of passage. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rite_of_passage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oath of the Horatii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_the_Horatii. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Nicolas Poussin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Poussin. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pompeo Batoni - Portrait of Richard Milles - 1758. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeo_Batoni_-_Portrait_of_Richard_Milles_-_1758.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.1: The Enlightenment is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.2: Rococo

Rococo in French Decoration

Rococo salons are known for their elaborate detail, serpentine design work, asymmetry and predisposition to lighter, pastel, or gold-based color palettes.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the importance of the Rococo salon in France and its typical design

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- After the reign of Louis XIV, the wealthy and aristocratic moved back to Paris from Versailles and began decorating their homes in the new Rococo style that was associated with King Louis XV.
- The notion of the salon is an Enlightenment era ideal that transformed the salon, or living room, into the central space for aristocracy to entertain guests and engage in intellectual conversation.
- Rococo interiors are highly unified in nature, and represent the coming together of a number of decorative arts.
- As with other Rococo art forms, the color palette is lighter, the lines are curvaceous ('S' curve), and the decoration is excessive.
- Furniture rose to new heights in the period and emphasized lighthearted frivolity.
- Furniture, friezes, sculpture, metalwork, wall, and ceiling decoration are woven together stylistically in the Rococo salon.

Key Terms

- **asymmetry**: Lacking a common measure between two objects or quantities; incommensurability.
- **serpentine**: Sinuous; curving in alternate directions.
- **mahogany**: Any of various tropical American evergreen trees, of the genus Swietenia, having a valuable hard red-brown wood.
- **palette**: The range of colors in a given work or body of work.

In 18th century Europe, the Rococo style became prevalent in interior design, painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. A reaction to the rigidity of Baroque style, the frivolous and playful Rococo first manifested itself with interior design and decorative work. In French, the word salon simply means living room or parlor, and Rococo salons refer to central rooms that are designed in the Rococo style. In addition, the notion of the 'salon' is an Enlightenment era ideal that transformed the living room into the central space for aristocracy to entertain guests and engage in intellectual conversation. The idea that one's architectural surroundings should encourage a way of life, or reflect one's values, was the philosophy of the time.

The Rococo interior reached its height in the total art work of the salon. Rococo salons are characterized by their elaborate detail, intricate patterns, serpentine design work, asymmetry, and a predisposition to lighter, pastel, and gold-based color palettes.

Bureau Danton de l'Hôtel de Bourvallais: This example of a Rococo salon exemplifies the serpentine design work and heavy use of gold that were both typical of the Rococo style.

As another means of reflecting status, furniture rose to new heights during the Rococo period, emphasizing the lighthearted frivolity that was prized by the style. Furniture design became physically lighter, so as to be easily moved around for gatherings, and many specialized pieces came to prominence, such as the *fauteuil chair*, the *voyeuse chair*, and the *berger et gondo*la. Furniture in the Rococo period was freestanding, as opposed to wall-based, in order to accentuate the lighthearted and versatile atmosphere that was desired by the aristocracy. Mahogany became the most widely used medium due to its strength, and mirrors also became increasingly popular.

Rococo salons often employed the use of asymmetry in design, which was termed *contraste*. Interior ornament included the use of sculpted forms on ceilings and walls, often somewhat abstract or employing leafy or shell-like textures. Two excellent examples of French Rococo are the Salon de Monsieur le Prince in the Petit Château at Chantilly, decorated by Jean Aubert; and the salons in the Hotel Soubise, Paris, by Germain Boffrand. Both of these salons exhibit typical Rococo style with walls, ceilings, and moulding decorated with delicate interlacings of curves based on the fundamental shapes of the 'S,' as well as with shell forms and other natural shapes.

Salon de la Princesse: A Rococo interior from the Hotel de Soubise, Paris that demonstrates highly elaborate ceiling work.

In France, the style began to decline by the 1750s. Criticized for its triviality and excess in ornament, Rococo style had already become more austere by the 1760s, as Neoclassicism began to take over as the dominant style in France and the rest of Europe.

Rococo in Painting and Sculpture

Rococo style in painting echoes the qualities evident in other manifestations of the style including serpentine lines, heavy use of ornament as well as themes revolving around playfulness, love, and nature.

Learning Objectives

Identify themes and qualities commonly associated with Rococo art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rococo style developed first in the decorative arts and interior design, and its influence later spread to architecture, sculpture, theater design, painting, and music.
- Rococo style is characterized by elaborate ornamentation, asymmetrical values, pastel color palette, and curved or serpentine lines.
- Rococo art works often depict themes of love, classical myths, youth, and playfulness.
- Antoine Watteau is considered to be the first great Rococo painter who influenced later Rococo masters such as Boucher and Fragonard.
- In sculpture, the work of Etienne-Maurice Falconet is widely considered to be the best representative of Rococo style.
- Rococo sculpture makes use of very delicate porcelain instead of marble or another heavy medium.

Key Terms

- **Rococo**: A style of baroque architecture and decorative art, from 18th century France, having elaborate ornamentation.
- **pastel**: Any of several subdued tints of colors, usually associated with pink, peach, yellow, green, blue, and lavender.
- **serpentine**: Sinuous; curving in alternate directions.

Rococo Painting

Painting during the Rococo period has many of the same qualities as other Rococo art forms such as heavy use of ornament, curved lines and the use of a gold and pastel-based palette. Additionally, forms are often asymmetrical and the themes are playful, even witty, rather than political, as in the case of Baroque art. Themes relating to myths of love as well as portraits and idyllic landscapes typify Rococo painting.

Antoine Watteau

Antoine Watteau is considered to be the first great Rococo painter. His influence is visible in the work of later Rococo painters such as Francois Boucher and Honore Fragonard. Watteau is known for his soft application of paint, dreamy atmosphere, and depiction of classical themes that often revolve around youth and love, exemplified in the painting *Pilgrimageto Cythera*.

Pilgrimage to Cythera by Antoine Watteau: Watteau's signature soft application of paint, dreamy atmosphere, and depiction of classical themes that often revolve around youth and love is evident in his work *Pilgrimage to Cythera*.

Francois Boucher

Francois Boucher became a master of Rococo painting somewhat later than Watteau. His work exemplifies many of the same characteristics, though with a slightly more mischievous and suggestive tone. Boucher had an illustrious career, and became court painter to King Louis XV in 1765. There was controversy later in his career as Boucher received some moral criticism from people such as Diderot for the themes present in his work. *The Blonde Odalisque* was particularly controversial, as it supposedly illustrated the extra marital affairs of the King.

Blond Odalisque by Francois Boucher: *Blond Odalisque* was a highly controversial work by Francois Boucher as it was thought to depict an affair of King Louis XV. The work employs serpentine lines, a reasonably pastel palette and themes of love indicative of Rococo artwork.

Rococo Sculpture

In sculpture, the work of Etienne-Maurice Falconet is widely considered to be the best representative of Rococo style. Generally, Rococo sculpture makes use of very delicate porcelain instead of marble or another heavy medium. Falconet was the director of a famous porcelain factory at Sevres. The prevalent themes in Rococo sculpture echoed those of the other mediums, with the display of classical themes, cherubs, love, playfulness, and nature being depicted most often as exemplified in the sculpture *Pygmalion and Galatee*.

Pygmalion and Galatee by Etienne-Maurice Falconet: *Pygmalion and Galatee* is indicative of Etienne Maurica Falconet's Rococo style in its depiction of lighthearted love, including a cherub indicating its predisposition to mythology.

Rococo Architecture

18th century Rococo architecture was a lighter, more graceful, yet also more elaborate version of Baroque architecture.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish Rococo architecture from its Baroque predecessor

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rococo architecture was a lighter, more graceful, yet also more elaborate version of Baroque architecture, which was ornate and austere.
- Rococo emphasized the asymmetry of forms, while Baroque was the opposite.
- The Baroque was more serious, placing an emphasis on religion, and was often characterized by Christian themes; Rococo was more secular and light-hearted.
- Rococo architecture brought significant changes to the building of edifices, placing an emphasis on privacy rather than the grand public majesty of Baroque architecture.

Key Terms

- **jocular**: Humorous, amusing or joking.

- **motif**: A recurring or dominant element in a work of art.
- **cherub**: A statue or other depiction of an angel, typically in the form of a winged child.

Rococo architecture was a lighter, more graceful, yet also more elaborate version of Baroque architecture, which was ornate and austere. While the styles were similar, there are some notable differences between both Rococo and Baroque architecture, such as symmetry; Rococo emphasized the asymmetry of forms, while Baroque was the opposite. The styles, despite both being richly decorated, also had different themes; the Baroque was more serious, placing an emphasis on religion, and was often characterized by Christian themes (the Baroque began in Rome as a response to the Protestant Reformation); Rococo architecture was an 18th century, more secular, adaptation of the Baroque that was characterized by more light-hearted and jocular themes. Other elements belonging to the architectural style of Rococo include numerous curves and decorations, as well as the use of pale colors.

There are numerous examples of Rococo buildings as well as architects. Among the most famous include the Catherine Palace in Russia, the Queluz National Palace in Portugal, the Augustusburg and Falkenlust Palaces in Brühl, the Chinese House in Potsdam, the Charlottenburg Palace in Germany, as well as elements of the Château de Versailles in France. Architects who were renowned for their constructions using the style include Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, an Italian architect who worked in Russia and who was noted for his lavish and opulent works, Philip de Lange, who worked in both Danish and Dutch Rococo architecture, or Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann, who worked in the late Baroque style and who contributed to the reconstruction of the city of Dresden in Germany.

Rococo architecture also brought significant changes to the building of edifices, placing an emphasis on privacy rather than the grand public majesty of Baroque architecture, as well as improving the structure of buildings in order to create a more healthy environment.

Catherine Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, Saint Petersburg: The residence originated in 1717, when Catherine I of Russia hired German architect Johann-Friedrich Braunstein to construct a summer palace for her pleasure. In 1733, Empress Elizabeth commissioned Mikhail Zemtsov and Andrei Kvasov to expand the Catherine Palace. Empress Elizabeth, however, found her mother's residence outdated and incommodious and in May 1752 asked her court architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli to demolish the old structure and replace it with a much grander edifice in a flamboyant Rococo style. Construction lasted for four years, and on July 30, 1756 the architect presented the brand-new 325-meter-long palace to the Empress, her dazed courtiers, and stupefied foreign ambassadors.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Italian Rococo interior design. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Rococo_interior_design. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Salon (gathering). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Salon_(gathering). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- asymmetry. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/asymmetry. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- mahogany. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mahogany. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- serpentine. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/serpentine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- palette. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/palette. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fichier:Salon de la princesse hotel de soubise. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Salon_de_la_princesse_hotel_de_soubise.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bureau Danton de l'Hu00f4tel de Bourvallais 005. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bureau_Danton_de_l'H%C3%B4tel_de_Bourvallais_005.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Embarkation for Cythera. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Embarkation_for_Cythera. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Q: What is the Rococo style? How is it different from the styles that came before and after?. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/themes/Edu/curriculum/curriculumQAAJAX.php?action=getcourseunitqas&courseunitid=31263. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- ARTH101: Art Appreciation and Techniques. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: https://learn.saylor.org/course/view.php?id=360. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Category:Rococo sculptors. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Rococo_sculptors. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Q: What is the Rococo style? How is it different from the styles that came before and after?. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/themes/Edu/curriculum/curriculumQAAJAX.php?action=getcourseunitqas&courseunitid=31263. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pastel. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pastel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- serpentine. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/serpentine. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fichier:Salon de la princesse hotel de soubise. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Salon_de_la_princesse_hotel_de_soubise.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bureau Danton de l'Hu00f4tel de Bourvallais 005. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bureau_Danton_de_l'H%C3%B4tel_de_Bourvallais_005.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Franu00e7ois Boucher - Blond Odalisque (L'Odalisque Blonde) - WGA2906. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fran%C3%A7ois_Boucher_-_Blond_Odalisque_(L'Odalisque_Blonde)_-_WGA2906.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Antoine Watteau - Pilgrimage to Cythera - WGA25454. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine_Watteau_-_Pilgrimage_to_Cythera_-_WGA25454.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- u00c9tienne-Maurice- Falconet-Pygmalion-&-Galatee hermitage-4. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%89tienne-Maurice-_Falconet-Pygmalion-&-Galatee_hermitage-4.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baroque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Baroque architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Baroque_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sanssouci. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanssouci. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Wies Church. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wies_Church. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- jocular. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/jocular. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- cherub. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cherub. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- motif. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/motif. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fichier:Salon de la princesse hotel de soubise. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: fr.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Salon_de_la_princesse_hotel_de_soubise.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bureau Danton de l'Hu00f4tel de Bourvallais 005. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bureau_Danton_de_l'H%C3%B4tel_de_Bourvallais_005.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Franu00e7ois Boucher - Blond Odalisque (L'Odalisque Blonde) - WGA2906. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fran%C3%A7ois_Boucher_-_Blond_Odalisque_(L'Odalisque_Blonde)_-_WGA2906.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Antoine Watteau - Pilgrimage to Cythera - WGA25454. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine_Watteau_-_Pilgrimage_to_Cythera_-_WGA25454.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- u00c9tienne-Maurice- Falconet-Pygmalion-&-Galatee hermitage-4. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%89tienne-Maurice-_Falconet-Pygmalion-&-Galatee_hermitage-4.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Catherine_Palace_in_Tsarskoe_Selo_02.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catherine_Palace_in_Tsarskoe_Selo_02.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 28.2: Rococo is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.3: Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism refers to movements in the arts that draw inspiration from the “classical” art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome.

Learning Objectives

Identify attributes of Neoclassicism and some of its key figures

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The height of Neoclassicism coincided with the 18th century Enlightenment era, and continued into the early 19th century.
- With the increasing popularity of the Grand Tour, it became fashionable to collect antiquities as souvenirs, which spread the Neoclassical style through Europe and America.
- Neoclassicism spanned all of the arts including painting, sculpture, the decorative arts, theatre, literature, music, and architecture.
- Generally speaking, Neoclassicism is defined stylistically by its use of straight lines, minimal use of color, simplicity of form and, of course, an adherence to classical values and techniques.
- Rococo, with its emphasis on asymmetry, bright colors, and ornamentation is typically considered to be the direct opposite of the Neoclassical style.

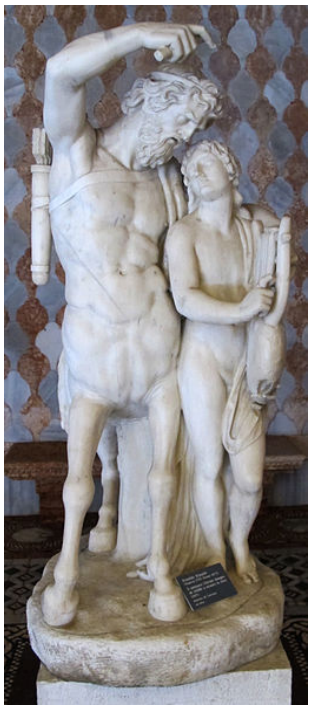
Key Terms

- **Grand Tour**: The traditional tour of Europe undertaken by mainly upper-class European young men of means. The custom flourished from about 1660 until the advent of large-scale rail transit in the 1840s.
- **Enlightenment**: A concept in spirituality, philosophy, and psychology related to achieving clarity of perception, reason, and knowledge.
- **Rococo**: A style of baroque architecture and decorative art, from 18th century France, having elaborate ornamentation.

The classical revival, also known as Neoclassicism, refers to movements in the arts that draw inspiration from the “classical” art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. The height of Neoclassicism coincided with the 18th century Enlightenment era, and continued into the early 19th century. The dominant styles during the 18th century were Baroque and Rococo. The latter, with its emphasis on asymmetry, bright colors, and ornamentation is typically considered to be the direct opposite of the Neoclassical style, which is based on order, symmetry, and simplicity. With the increasing popularity of the Grand Tour, it became fashionable to collect antiquities as souvenirs. This tradition of collecting laid the foundations for many great art collections and spread the classical revival throughout Europe and America.

Neoclassicism grew to encompass all of the arts, including painting, sculpture, the decorative arts, theatre, literature, music, and architecture. The style can generally be identified by its use of straight lines, minimal use of color, simplicity of form and, of course, its adherence to classical values and techniques.

In music, the period saw the rise of classical music and in painting, the works of Jaques-Louis David became synonymous with the classical revival. However, Neoclassicism was felt most strongly in architecture, sculpture, and the decorative arts, where classical models in the same medium were fairly numerous and accessible. Sculpture in particular had a great wealth of ancient models from which to learn, however, most were Roman copies of Greek originals.



Rinaldo Rinaldi, *Chirone Insegna Ad Achille a Suonare La Cetra*: Executed in a classical style and adhering to classical themes, this sculpture is a typical example of the Neoclassical style.

Neoclassical architecture was modeled after the classical style and, as with other art forms, was in many ways a reaction against the exuberant Rococo style. The architecture of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio became very popular in the mid 18th century. Additionally, archaeological ruins found in Pompeii and Herculaneum informed many of the stylistic values of Neoclassical interior design based on the ancient Roman rediscoveries.

Villa Godi Valmarana, Lonedo di Lugo, Veneto, Italy: Villa Godi was one of the first works by Palladio. Its austere facade, arched doorways and minimal symmetry reflect his adherence to classical stylistic values.

Neoclassical Paintings

Neoclassical painting, produced by men and women, drew its inspiration from the classical art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the overarching themes present in Neoclassical painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Neoclassical subject matter draws from the history and general culture of ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. It is often described as a reaction to the lighthearted and "frivolous" subject matter of the Rococo.
- Neoclassical painting is characterized by the use of straight lines, a smooth paint surface, the depiction of light, a minimal use of color, and the clear, crisp definition of forms.
- The works of Jacques-Louis David are usually hailed as the epitome of Neoclassical painting.
- David attracted over 300 students to his studio, including Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Marie-Guillemine Benoist, and Angélique Mongez, the last of whom tried to extend the Neoclassical tradition beyond her teacher's death.

Key Terms

- **Enlightenment**: A philosophical movement in 17th and 18th century Europe. Also known as the Age of Reason, this was an era that emphasized rationalism.

Background and Characteristics

Neoclassicism is the term for movements in the arts that draw inspiration from the classical art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. The height of Neoclassicism coincided with the 18th century Enlightenment era and continued into the early 19th century. With the advent of the Grand Tour—a much enjoyed trip around Europe intended to introduce young men to the extended culture and people of their world—it became fashionable to collect antiquities as souvenirs. This tradition laid the foundations of many great collections and ensured the spread of the Neoclassical revival throughout Europe and America. The French Neoclassical style would greatly contribute to the monumentalism of the French Revolution, with the emphasis of both lying in virtue and patriotism.

Neoclassical painting is characterized by the use of straight lines, a smooth paint surface hiding brush work, the depiction of light, a minimal use of color, and the clear, crisp definition of forms. Its subject matter usually relates to either Greco-Roman history or other cultural attributes, such as allegory and virtue. The softness of paint application and light-hearted and "frivolous" subject matter that characterize Rococo painting is recognized as the opposite of the Neoclassical style. The works of Jacques-Louis David are widely considered to be the epitome of Neoclassical painting. Many painters combined aspects of Romanticism with a vaguely Neoclassical style before David's success, but these works did not strike any chords with audiences. Typically, the subject matter of Neoclassical painting consisted of the depiction of events from history, mythological scenes, and the architecture and ruins of ancient Rome.

The School of David

Neoclassical painting gained new momentum with the great success of David's *Oath of the Horatii* at the Paris Salon of 1785. The painting had been commissioned by the royal government and was created in a style that was the perfect combination of idealized structure and dramatic effect. The painting created an uproar, and David was proclaimed to have perfectly defined the Neoclassical taste in his painting style. He thereby became the quintessential painter of the movement. In *The Oath of the Horatii*, the perspective is perpendicular to the picture plane. It is defined by a dark arcade behind several classical heroic figures. There is an element of theatre, or staging, that evokes the grandeur of opera. David soon became the leading French painter and enjoyed a great deal of government patronage. Over the course of his long career, he attracted over 300 students to his studio.

Jacques-Louis David. *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784): Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, a Neoclassical painter of history and portraiture, was one of David's students. Deeply devoted to classical techniques, Ingres is known to have believed himself to be a conservator of the style of the ancient masters, although he later painted subjects in the Romantic style. Examples of his Neoclassical work include the paintings *Virgil Reading to Augustus* (1812), and *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1864). Both David and Ingres made use of the highly organized imagery, straight lines, and clearly defined forms that were typical of Neoclassical painting during the 18th century.

Virgil Reading to Augustus by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1812): Oil on canvas. The Walters Art Museum.

While tradition and the rules governing the Académie Française barred women from studying from the nude model (a necessity for executing an effective Neoclassical painting), David believed that women were capable of producing successful art of the style and welcomed many as his students. Among the most successful were Marie-Guillemine Benoist, who eventually won commissions from the Bonaparte family, and Angélique Mongez, who won patrons from as far away as Russia.

Self-Portrait by Marie-Guillemine Benoist (1788): In this untraced oil on canvas, Benoist (then Leroulx de la Ville) paints a section from David's acclaimed Neoclassical painting of Justinian's blinded general Belisarius begging for alms. Her return of the viewer's gaze and classical attire show her confidence as an artist and conformity to artistic trends.

Mongez is best known for being one of the few women to paint monumental subjects that often included the male nude, a feat for which hostile critics often attacked her.

Theseus and Pirithoüs Clearing the Earth of Brigands, Deliver Two Women from the Hands of Their Abductors by Angélique Mongez (1806): Oil on canvas. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Mongez and Antoine-Jean Gros, another of David's students, tried to carry on the Neoclassical tradition after David's death in 1825 but were unsuccessful in face of the growing popularity of Romanticism.

Neoclassical Sculpture

A reaction against the "frivolity" of the Rococo, Neoclassical sculpture depicts serious subjects influenced by the ancient Greek and Roman past.

Learning Objectives

Explain what motifs are common to Neoclassical sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Neoclassicism emerged in the second half of the 18th century, following the excavations of the ruins of Pompeii, which sparked renewed interest in the Graeco-Roman world.
- Neoclassical sculpture is defined by its symmetry, life-sized to monumental scale, and its serious subject matter.
- The subjects of Neoclassical sculpture ranged from mythological figures to heroes of the past to major contemporary personages.
- Neoclassical sculpture could capture its subject as either idealized or in a more veristic manner.

Key Terms

- **verism**: An ancient Roman technique, in which the subject is depicted with "warts and all" realism.

As with painting, Neoclassicism made its way into sculpture in the second half of the 18th century. In addition to the ideals of the Enlightenment, the excavations of the ruins at Pompeii began to spark a renewed interest in classical culture. Whereas Rococo sculpture consisted of small-scale asymmetrical objects focusing on themes of love and gaiety, neoclassical sculpture assumed life-size to monumental scale and focused on themes of heroism, patriotism, and virtue.

In his tomb sculpture, the Enlightenment *philosophe* Voltaire is honored in true Neoclassical form. In a style influenced by ancient Roman verism, he appears as an elderly man to honor his wisdom. He wears a contemporary commoner's blouse to convey his humbleness, and his robe assumes the appearance of an ancient Roman toga from a distance. Like his ancient predecessors, his facial expression and his body language suggest an air of scholarly seriousness.

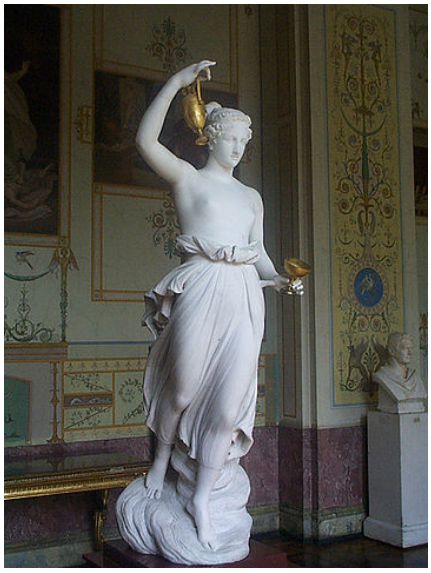
Voltaire's tomb.: Panthéon, Paris.

Neoclassical sculptors benefited from an abundance of ancient models, albeit Roman copies of Greek bronzes in most cases. The leading Neoclassical sculptors enjoyed much acclaim during their lifetimes. One of them was Jean-Antoine Houdon, whose work was mainly portraits, very often as busts, which do not sacrifice a strong impression of the sitter's personality to idealism. His style became more classical as his long career continued, and represents a rather smooth progression from Rococo charm to classical dignity. Unlike some Neoclassical sculptors he did not insist on his sitters wearing Roman dress, or being unclothed. He portrayed most of the great figures of the Enlightenment, and traveled to America to produce a statue of George Washington, as well as busts of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and other luminaries of the new republic. His portrait bust of Washington depicts the first President of the United States as a stern, yet competent leader, with the influence of Roman verism evident in his wrinkled forehead, receding hairline, and double chin.

Bust of George Washington by Jean-Antoine Houdon (c. 1786)

National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC.

The Italian artist Antonio Canova and the Danish artist Bertel Thorvaldsen were both based in Rome, and as well as portraits produced many ambitious life-size figures and groups. Both represented the strongly idealizing tendency in Neoclassical sculpture.



Hebe by Antonio Canova (1800–05).: Hermitage State Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Canova has a lightness and grace, where Thorvaldsen is more severe. The difference is exemplified in Canova's *Hebe* (1800–05), whose contrapposto almost mimics lively dance steps as she prepares to pour nectar and ambrosia from a small amphora into a chalice, and Thorvaldsen's *Monument to Copernicus* (1822-30), whose subject sits upright with a compass and armillary sphere.

Monument to Copernicus by Bertel Thorvaldsen (1822–30).: Bronze. Warsaw, Poland.

Neoclassical Architecture

Neoclassical architecture looks to the classical past of the Graeco-Roman era, the Renaissance, and classicized Baroque to convey a new era based on Enlightenment principles.

Learning Objectives

Identify what sets Neoclassical architecture apart from other movements

Key Takeaways

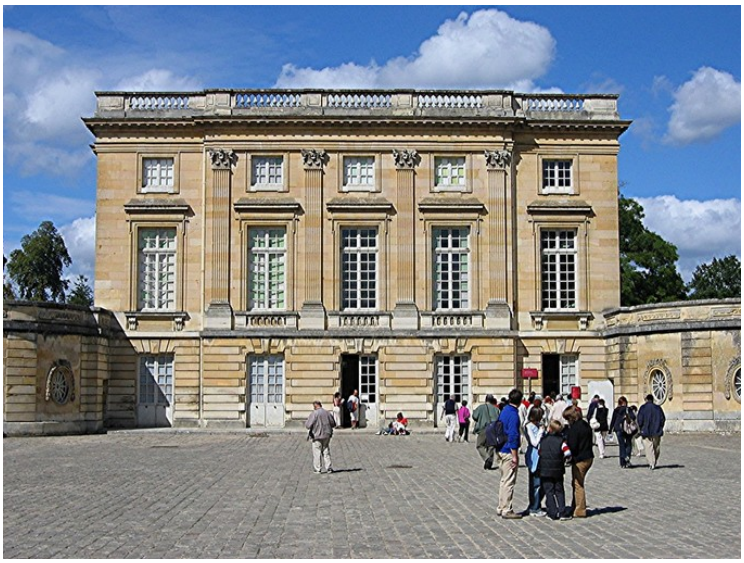
Key Points

- Neoclassical architecture was produced by the Neoclassical movement in the mid 18th century. It manifested in its details as a reaction against the Rococo style of naturalistic ornament, and in its architectural formulas as an outgrowth of the classicizing features of Late Baroque.
- The first phase of Neoclassicism in France is expressed in the “Louis XVI style” of architects like Ange-Jacques Gabriel (Petit Trianon, 1762–68) while the second phase is expressed in the late 18th-century Directoire style.
- Neoclassical architecture emphasizes its planar qualities, rather than sculptural volumes. Projections and recessions and their effects of light and shade are more flat, while sculptural bas- reliefs are flatter and tend to be enframed in friezes, tablets, or panels.
- Structures such as the Arc de Triomphe, the Panthéon in Paris, and Chiswick House in London have elements that convey the influence of ancient Greek and Roman architecture, as well as some influence from the Renaissance and Late Baroque periods.

Neoclassical architecture, which began in the mid 18th century, looks to the classical past of the Graeco-Roman era, the Renaissance, and classicized Baroque to convey a new era based on Enlightenment principles. This movement manifested in its details as a reaction against the Rococo style of naturalistic ornament, and in its architectural formulas as an outgrowth of some classicizing features of Late Baroque. In its purest form, Neoclassicism is a style principally derived from the architecture of Classical Greece and Rome. In form, Neoclassical architecture emphasizes the wall and maintains separate identities to each of its parts.

The first phase of Neoclassicism in France is expressed in the Louis XVI style of architects like Ange-Jacques Gabriel (Petit Trianon, 1762–68). Ange-Jacques Gabriel was the Premier Architecte at Versailles, and his Neoclassical designs for the royal

palace dominated mid 18th century French architecture.



Ange-Jacques Gabriel. Château of the Petit Trianon.: The Petit Trianon in the park at Versailles demonstrates the neoclassical architectural style under Louis XVI.

After the French Revolution, the second phase of Neoclassicism was expressed in the late 18th century Directoire style. The Directoire style reflected the Revolutionary belief in the values of republican Rome. This style was a period in the decorative arts, fashion, and especially furniture design, concurrent with the post-Revolution French Directoire (November 2, 1795–November 10, 1799). The style uses Neoclassical architectural forms, minimal carving, planar expanses of highly grained veneers, and applied decorative painting. The Directoire style was primarily established by the architects and designers Charles Percier (1764–1838) and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine (1762–1853), who collaborated on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, which is considered emblematic of French neoclassical architecture.

Arc de Triomphe: The Arc de Triomphe, although finished in the early 19th century, is emblematic of French neoclassical architecture that dominated the Directoire period.

Though Neoclassical architecture employs the same classical vocabulary as Late Baroque architecture, it tends to emphasize its planar qualities rather than its sculptural volumes. Projections, recessions, and their effects on light and shade are more flat. Sculptural bas-reliefs are flatter and tend to be framed in friezes, tablets, or panels. Its clearly articulated individual features are isolated rather than interpenetrating, autonomous, and complete in themselves.

Even sacred architecture was classicized during the Neoclassical period. The Panthéon, located in the Latin Quarter of Paris, was originally built as a church dedicated to St. Geneviève and to house the reliquary châsse containing her relics. However, during the French Revolution, the Panthéon was secularized and became the resting place of Enlightenment icons such as Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Designer Jacques-Germain Soufflot had the intention of combining the lightness and brightness of the Gothic cathedral with classical principles, but its role as a mausoleum required the great Gothic windows to be blocked. In 1780, Soufflot died and was replaced by his student, Jean-Baptiste Rondelet.

Jacques-Germain Soufflot (original architect) and Jean-Baptiste Rondelet. The Panthéon.: Begun 1758, completed 1790.

Similar to a Roman temple, the Panthéon is entered through a portico that consists of three rows of columns (in this case, Corinthian) topped by a Classical pediment. In a fashion more closely related to ancient Greece, the pediment is adorned with reliefs throughout the triangular space. Beneath the pediment, the inscription on the entablature translates as: “To the great men, the grateful homeland.” The dome, on the other hand, is more influenced by Renaissance and Baroque predecessors, such as St. Peter’s in Rome and St. Paul’s in London.

Intellectually, Neoclassicism was symptomatic of a desire to return to the perceived “purity” of the arts of Rome. The movement was also inspired by a more vague perception (“ideal”) of Ancient Greek arts and, to a lesser extent, 16th century Renaissance Classicism, which was also a source for academic Late Baroque architecture. There is an anti-Rococo strain that can be detected in some European architecture of the earlier 18th century. This strain is most vividly represented in the Palladian architecture of Georgian Britain and Ireland.

Lord Burlington. Chiswick House: The design of Chiswick House in West London was influenced by that of Palladio’s domestic architecture, particularly the Villa Rotunda in Venice. The stepped dome and temple façade were clearly influenced by the Roman Pantheon.

The trend toward the classical is also recognizable in the classicizing vein of Late Baroque architecture in Paris. It is a robust architecture of self-restraint, academically selective now of “the best” Roman models. These models were increasingly available for close study through the medium of architectural engravings of measured drawings of surviving Roman architecture.

French Neoclassicism continued to be a major force in academic art through the 19th century and beyond—a constant antithesis to Romanticism or Gothic revivals.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Enlightenment. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Enlightenment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassical architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassical_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Grand Tour. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand%20Tour. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rinaldo Rinaldi, Chirone Insegna Ad Achille a Suonare La Cetra. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8e/Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG/258px-Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Palladio#/media/File:Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Oath of the Horatii. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_the_Horatii. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Angu00e9lique Mongez. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/OdICUY. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Artistic Conventions in Painting. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/11033. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Painting and Sculpture. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/3587. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jacques-Louis David. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques-Louis_David. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marie-Guillemine Benoist. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie-Guillemine_Benoist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Auguste-Dominique_Ingres. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rinaldo Rinaldi, Chirone Insegna Ad Achille a Suonare La Cetra. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8e/Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG/258px-Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Palladio#/media/File:Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 610px-Mongez_TheseusAndPirithous_MIA_9772.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44228169. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 509px-Jean-Auguste-Dominique_INGRES_-_Tu_Marcellus_Eris_-_Musu00e9e_des_Augustins_-_RO_124.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26746367. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 607px-Jacques-Louis_David,_Le_Serment_des_Horaces.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5510374. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Marie-Guillemine_Benoist.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4485384. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism#Sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Panthu00e9on. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Panth%C3%A9on. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Painting and Sculpture. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/3587. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Nicolaus Copernicus Monument, Warsaw. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolaus_Copernicus_Monument,_Warsaw. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jean-Antoine Houdon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Antoine_Houdon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hebe (Mythology). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebe_(mythology). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rinaldo Rinaldi, Chirone Insegna Ad Achille a Suonare La Cetra. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8e/Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG/258px-Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Palladio#/media/File:Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known*

Copyright

- 610px-Mongez_TheseusAndPirithous_MIA_9772.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44228169. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 509px-Jean-Auguste-Dominique_INGRES_-_Tu_Marcellus_Eris_-_Musu00e9e_des_Augustins_-_RO_124.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26746367. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 607px-Jacques-Louis_David,_Le_Serment_des_Horaces.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5510374. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Marie-Guillemine_Benoist.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4485384. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Voltaire's_tomb.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Voltaire%27s_tomb.jpg#/media/File:Voltaire%27s_tomb.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Canova-Hebe_30_degree_view.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=574818. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 435px-Copernicus_by_Thorwaldsen_Warsaw_02.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11229451. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- HoudonWashingtonNPG.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3689635. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Architecture. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com/atoms/8057. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chiswick House. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiswick_House. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Panthu00e9on. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Panth%C3%A9on. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rinaldo Rinaldi, Chirone Insegna Ad Achille a Suonare La Cetra. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8e/Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG/258px-Rinaldo_rinaldi,_chirone_insegna_ad_achille_a_suonare_la_cetra,_1817.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Palladio#/media/File:Villa_godi_valmarana_front.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 610px-Mongez_TheseusAndPirithous_MIA_9772.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44228169. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 509px-Jean-Auguste-Dominique_INGRES_-_Tu_Marcellus_Eris_-_Musu00e9e_des_Augustins_-_RO_124.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26746367. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 607px-Jacques-Louis_David,_Le_Serment_des_Horaces.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5510374. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Marie-Guillemine_Benoist.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4485384. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 360px-Voltaire's_tomb.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Voltaire%27s_tomb.jpg#/media/File:Voltaire%27s_tomb.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 360px-Canova-Hebe_30_degree_view.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=574818. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 435px-Copernicus_by_Thorwaldsen_Warsaw_02.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11229451. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- HoudonWashingtonNPG.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3689635. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- 640px-Panthu00e9on,_Paris_25_March_2012.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Panth%C3%A9on,_Paris_25_March_2012.jpg#/media/File:Panth%C3%A9on,_Paris_25_March_2012.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- arc-triomphe.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arc_Triomphe.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ch-c3-a2teautrianon.jpeg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ch%C3%A2teautrianon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 640px-Chiswick_House.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chiswick_House.jpg#/media/File:Chiswick_House.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.3: Neoclassicism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.4: Neoclassicism and Romanticism

Romanticism

Romanticism, fueled by the French Revolution, was a reaction to the scientific rationalism and classicism of the Age of Enlightenment.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the political and theoretical foundations of Romanticism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The ideals of the French Revolution created the context from which both Romanticism and the Counter- Enlightenment emerged.
- Romanticism was a revolt against the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and also a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature.
- Romanticism legitimized the individual imagination as a critical authority, which permitted freedom from classical notions of form in art.
- The Industrial Revolution also influenced Romanticism, which was in part about escaping from modern realities.
- Romanticism was also influenced by *Sturm und Drang*, a German Counter-Enlightenment movement that emphasized subjectivity and intense emotion.

Key Terms

- **Romanticism**: 18th century artistic and intellectual movement that stressed emotion, freedom, and individual imagination.
- **Sturm und Drang**: "Storm and Stress," a German proto-romantic movement signifying turmoil and emotional intensity.
- **Counter-Enlightenment**: A movement that arose primarily in late 18th and early 19th century Germany against the rationalism, universalism, and empiricism commonly associated with the Enlightenment.

Overview

Romanticism was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century. In most areas the movement was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 CE to 1840 CE. Romanticism reached beyond the rational and Classicist ideal models to elevate a revived medievalism.

The Influence of the French Revolution

Though influenced by other artistic and intellectual movements, the ideologies and events of the French Revolution created the primary context from which both Romanticism and the Counter-Enlightenment emerged. Upholding the ideals of the Revolution, Romanticism was a revolt against the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and also a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. Romanticism elevated the achievements of what it perceived as heroic individualists and artists, whose pioneering examples would elevate society. It also legitimized the individual imagination as a critical authority, which permitted freedom from classical notions of form in art.

The Passion of the German *Sturm und Drang* Movement

Romanticism was also inspired by the German *Sturm und Drang* movement (Storm and Stress), which prized intuition and emotion over Enlightenment rationalism. This proto-romantic movement was centered on literature and music, but also influenced the visual arts. The movement emphasized individual subjectivity. Extremes of emotion were given free expression in reaction to the perceived constraints of rationalism imposed by the Enlightenment and associated aesthetic movements.

Sturm und Drang in the visual arts can be witnessed in paintings of storms and shipwrecks showing the terror and irrational destruction wrought by nature. These pre-romantic works were fashionable in Germany from the 1760s on through the 1780s, illustrating a public audience for emotionally charged artwork. Additionally, disturbing visions and portrayals of nightmares were

gaining an audience in Germany as evidenced by Goethe's possession and admiration of paintings by Fuseli, which were said to be capable of "giving the viewer a good fright." Notable artists included Joseph Vernet, Caspar Wolf, Philip James de Loutherbourg, and Henry Fuseli.

The Shipwreck by Claude Joseph Vernet, 1759: Vernet participated in the proto-Romantic Sturm und Drang movement.

The Industrial Revolution also had an influence on Romanticism, which was in part an escape from modern realities of population growth, urban sprawl, and industrialism. Indeed, in the second half of the 19th century, "Realism" was offered as a polarized opposite to Romanticism.

Painting in the Romantic Period

Romanticism was a prevalent artistic movement in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Romanticism as seen in the paintings from this period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- " History painting," traditionally referred to technically difficult narrative paintings of multiple subjects, but became more frequently focused on recent historical events.
- Gericault and Delacroix were leaders of French romantic painting, and both produced iconic history paintings.
- Ingres, though firmly committed to Neoclassical values, is seen as expressing the Romantic spirit of the times.
- The Spanish artist Francisco Goya is considered perhaps the greatest painter of the Romantic period, though he did not necessarily self-identify with the movement; his oeuvre reflects the integration of many styles.
- The German variety of Romanticism notably valued wit, humor, and beauty.

Key Terms

- **Romanticism**: 18th century artistic and intellectual movement that stressed emotion, freedom, and individual imagination.
- **Neoclassicism**: The name given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theater, music, and architecture that draw inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome.
- **history painting**: A a genre in painting defined by its subject matter rather than artistic style. These paintings usually depict a moment in a narrative story, rather than a specific and static subject.

Romanticism

While the arrival of Romanticism in French art was delayed by the hold of Neoclassicism on the academies, it became increasingly popular during the Napoleonic period. Its initial form was the history paintings that acted as propaganda for the new regime. The key generation of French Romantics born between 1795–1805, in the words of Alfred de Vigny, had been "conceived between battles, attended school to the rolling of drums." The French Revolution (1789–1799) followed by the Napoleonic Wars until 1815, meant that war, and the attending political and social turmoil that went along with them, served as the background for Romanticism.

History Painting

Since the Renaissance, history painting was considered among the highest and most difficult forms of art. History painting is defined by its subject matter rather than artistic style. History paintings usually depict a moment in a narrative story rather than a specific and static subject. In the Romantic period, history painting was extremely popular and increasingly came to refer to the depiction of historical scenes, rather than those from religion or mythology.

French Romanticism

This generation of the French school developed personal Romantic styles while still concentrating on history painting with a political message. Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* of 1821 remains the greatest achievement of the Romantic history painting, which in its day had a powerful anti-government message.

The Raft of the Medusa by Jean Louis Theodore Gericault, 1818–21: This painting is regarded as one of the greatest Romantic era paintings.

Ingres

Profoundly respectful of the past, Ingres assumed the role of a guardian of academic orthodoxy against the ascendant Romantic style represented by his nemesis Eugène Delacroix. He described himself as a "conservator of good doctrine, and not an innovator." Nevertheless, modern opinion has tended to regard Ingres and the other Neoclassicists of his era as embodying the Romantic spirit of his time, while his expressive distortions of form and space make him an important precursor of modern art.

Achilles Receiving the Envoys of Agamemnon by Ingres, 1801: Ingres, though firmly committed to Neoclassical values, is seen as expressing the Romantic spirit of the times.

Delacroix

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) had great success at the Salon with works like *The Barque of Dante* (1822), *The Massacre at Chios* (1824) and *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827). Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) remains, with *The Medusa*, one of the best known works of French Romantic painting. Both of these works reflected current events and appealed to public sentiment.

Liberty Leading the People, by Delacroix, 1830: The history paintings of Eugene Delacroix epitomized the Romantic period.

Goya

Spanish painter Francisco Goya is today generally regarded as the greatest painter of the Romantic period. However, in many ways he remained wedded to the classicism and realism of his training. More than any other artist of the period, Goya exemplified the Romantic expression of the artist's feelings and his personal imaginative world. He also shared with many of the Romantic painters a more free handling of paint, emphasized in the new prominence of the brushstroke and impasto, which tended to be repressed in neoclassicism under a self-effacing finish. Goya's work is renowned for its expressive line, color, and brushwork as well as its distinct subversive commentary.

The Milkmaid of Bordeaux by Goya, ca. 1825–1827: Though he worked in a variety of styles, Goya is remembered as perhaps the greatest painter of the Romantic period.

German Romanticism

Compared to English Romanticism, German Romanticism developed relatively late, and, in the early years, coincided with Weimar Classicism (1772–1805). In contrast to the seriousness of English Romanticism, the German variety of Romanticism notably valued wit, humor, and beauty.

The early German romantics strove to create a new synthesis of art, philosophy, and science, largely by viewing the Middle Ages as a simpler period of integrated culture, however, the German romantics became aware of the tenuousness of the cultural unity they sought. Late-stage German Romanticism emphasized the tension between the daily world and the irrational and supernatural projections of creative genius. Key painters in the German Romantic tradition include Joseph Anton Koch, Adrian Ludwig Richter, Otto Reinhold Jacobi, and Philipp Otto Runge among others.

The Hulsenbeck Children by Phillip Otto Runge, oil on canvas: Runge was a well-known German Romantic painter.

Landscape Painting in the Romantic Period

Landscape painting in Europe and America greatly increased in prominence during the 18th and particularly the 19th century.

Learning Objectives

Describe the emergence of landscape painting in France, England, Holland, and the United States during the years of the Enlightenment

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The decline of explicitly religious works, a result of the Protestant Reformation, contributed to the rise in the popularity of landscapes.
- English painters, working in the Romantic tradition, became well known for watercolor landscapes in the 18th century.
- Artists in the Barbizon School brought landscape painting to prominence in France, and were inspired by English landscape artist John Constable. The Barbizon school was an important precursor to Impressionism.
- The glorified depiction of a nation's natural wonders, and the development of a distinct national style, were both ways in which nationalism influenced landscape painting in Europe and America.
- The Hudson River School was the most influential landscape art movement in 19th century America.

Key Terms

- **Romanticism**: 18th century artistic and intellectual movement that stressed emotion, freedom, and individual imagination
- **plein air**: En plein air is a French expression that means "in the open air," and refers to the act of painting outdoors. In the mid-19th century, working in natural light became particularly important to the Barbizon School and Impressionism.

Dutch and English Landscape Painting

Landscape painting depicts natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests, in which the main subject is typically a wide view and the elements are arranged into a coherent composition. During the Dutch Golden Age of painting of the 17th century, this type of painting greatly increased in popularity, and many artists specialized in the genre. In particular, painters of this era were known for developing extremely subtle, realist techniques of depicting light and weather. The popularity of landscape painting in this region, during this time, was in part a reflection of the virtual disappearance of religious art in the Netherlands,

which was then a Calvinist society. In the 18th and 19th centuries, religious painting declined across all of Europe, and the movement of Romanticism spread, both of which provided important historical ingredients for landscape painting to ascend to a more prominent place in art.

In England, landscapes had initially only been painted as the backgrounds for portraits, and typically portrayed the parks or estates of a landowner. This changed as a result of Anthony van Dyck, who, along with other Flemish artists living in England, began a national tradition. In the 18th century, watercolor painting, mostly of landscapes, became an English speciality. The nation had both a buoyant market for professional works of this variety, and a large number of amateur painters. By the beginning of the 19th century, the most highly regarded English artists were all, for the most part, dedicated landscapists, including John Constable, J.M.W. Turner, and Samuel Palmer.

The Hay Wain by John Constable, 1821: Constable was a popular English Romantic Painter.

French Landscape Painting

French painters were slower to develop an interest in landscapes, but in 1824, the Salon de Paris exhibited the works of John Constable, an extremely talented English landscape painter. His rural scenes influenced some of the younger French artists of the time, moving them to abandon formalism and to draw inspiration directly from nature. During the revolutions of 1848, artists gathered in Barbizon to follow Constable's ideas, making nature the subject of their paintings. They formed what is referred to as the Barbizon School.

During the late 1860s, the Barbizon painters attracted the attention of a younger generation of French artists studying in Paris. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Frédéric Bazille among others, practiced plein air painting and developed what would later be called Impressionism, an extremely influential movement.

In Europe, as John Ruskin noted, and Sir Kenneth Clark confirmed, landscape painting was the "chief artistic creation of the 19th century," and "the dominant art." As a result, in the times that followed, it became common for people to "assume that the appreciation of natural beauty and the painting of landscape was a normal and enduring part of our spiritual activity."

Nationalism in Landscape Painting

Nationalism has been implicated in the popularity of 17th century Dutch landscapes, and in the 19th century, when other nations, such as England and France, attempted to develop distinctive national schools of their own. Painters involved in these movements often attempted to express the unique nature of the landscape of their homeland.

The Hudson River School

In the United States, a similar movement, called the Hudson River School, emerged in the 19th century and quickly became one of the most distinctive worldwide purveyors of landscape pieces. American painters in this movement created works of mammoth scale in an attempt to capture the epic size and scope of the landscapes that inspired them. The work of Thomas Cole, the school's generally acknowledged founder, seemed to emanate from a similar philosophical position as that of European landscape artists. Both championed, from a position of secular faith, the spiritual benefits that could be gained from contemplating nature. Some of

the later Hudson River School artists, such as Albert Bierstadt, created less comforting works that placed a greater emphasis (with a great deal of Romantic exaggeration) on the raw, terrifying power of nature.

The Oxbow by Thomas Cole, 1836: Thomas Cole was a founding member of the pioneering Hudson School, the most influential landscape art movement in 19th century America.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism%23The_period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sturm und Drang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturm_und_Drang%23In_visual_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sturm und Drang. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturm%20und%20Drang. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Counter-Enlightenment. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Enlightenment. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseph Vernet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Vernet. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Raft of the Medusa. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Raft_of_the_Medusa. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Ambassadors of Agamemnon in the tent of Achilles. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_of_Agamemnon_in_the_tent_of_Achilles. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Liberty Leading the People. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_Leading_the_People. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Auguste_Dominique_Ingres. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Spanish art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_art%2318th_century. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-classicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-classicism%23Painting_and_printmaking. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism%23Romantic_visual_arts. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- history painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/history%20painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseph Vernet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Vernet. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Eugu00e8ne Delacroix. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Auguste_Dominique_Ingres. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Francisco Goya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Goya. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Philipp_Otto_Runge_003.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Otto_Runge#/media/File:Philipp_Otto_Runge_003.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- JEAN_LOUIS_THEu0301ODORE_GEu0301RICAULT_-_La_Balsa_de_la_Medusa_Museo_del_Louvre_1818-19.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/15/JEAN_LOUIS_TH%C3%89ODORE_G%C3%89RICAULT_-_La_Balsa_de_la_Medusa_%28Museo_del_Louvre%2C_1818-19%29.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Oxbow. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Oxbow. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Hay Wain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hay_Wain. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Landscape art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_art%23Western_tradition. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Landscape art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barbizon school. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbizon_school. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Landscape art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_art%23Western_tradition. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- plein air. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/plein%20air. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Joseph Vernet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Vernet. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Eugu00e8ne Delacroix. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Auguste_Dominique_Ingres. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Francisco Goya. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Goya. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Philipp_Otto_Runge_003.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Otto_Runge#/media/File:Philipp_Otto_Runge_003.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- JEAN_LOUIS_THEu0301ODORE_GEu0301RICAULT_-_La_Balsa_de_la_Medusa_Museo_del_Louvre_1818-19.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/15/JEAN_LOUIS_TH%C3%89ODORE_G%C3%89RICAULT_-_La_Balsa_de_la_Medusa_%28Museo_del_Louvre%2C_1818-19%29.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Landscape art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_art. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Thomas Cole. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cole. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.4: Neoclassicism and Romanticism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.5: The Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival was an architectural movement beginning in England during the 1740s that sought to revive medieval forms.

Learning Objectives

Generalize about the Gothic Revival style architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Also termed Victorian Gothic and Neo-Gothic, the Gothic Revival sought to revive medieval forms, much like the Neoclassical style sought to revive works from classical antiquity.
- The Gothic Revival occurred as industrialization progressed, in part because there was a reaction against the use of machinery and factory production.
- While the Neoclassical style of the 18th century was associated with “radical” and liberal perspectives, the Gothic Revival was associated with “traditional” sensibilities, such as conservatism and the monarchy. The Gothic Revival style is characterized by its stone and brick structures, many of which are religious in nature, as well as having heavy decoration, pointed arches, steep gables, and large windows.
- Gothic revival cottages and smaller buildings, called “Carpenter Gothic,” also became popular.
- A. W. N. Pugin was a prominent architect, designer, artist, and critic who was involved in the Gothic Revival style.

Key Terms

- **medievalism**: A custom or belief from the Middle Ages.
- **gable**: The triangular area of external wall adjacent to two meeting sloped roofs.
- **tracery**: Bars or ribs, usually of stone or wood, or other material, that subdivide an opening or stand in relief against a door or wall as an ornamental feature.

The Gothic Revival was primarily an architectural movement that began in 1740s England. Also termed Victorian Gothic and Neo-Gothic, the style sought to revive medieval forms, much like the Neoclassical style sought to revive works from classical antiquity. During the 18th century, the ruins of medieval Gothic architecture began to receive newfound appreciation after having been relatively dismissed in the overall history of architecture. Some critics believe there was a kind of nostalgia for an enchanted, less rational world that was linked to the perceived superstitions of medieval Catholicism.

In England, the center of the Gothic revival, the movement was intertwined with philosophical trends associated with a reawakening of Christian traditions in response to the growth of religious nonconformism. Ultimately, the Gothic style became widespread in the third quarter of the 19th century. While the Neoclassical style of the 18th century was associated with “radical” and liberal perspectives, the Gothic Revival was associated with “traditional” sensibilities, such as conservatism and the monarchy. As industrialization progressed, there was an increasing reaction against the use of machinery and factory production. Supporters of medievalism criticized industrial society, believing the pre-industrial model to be a golden age.

Paralleling the ascendancy of Neo-Gothic styles in 19th century England, interest spread rapidly to Europe, Australia, South Africa, and the Americas. Indeed, the number of Gothic Revival and Carpenter Gothic structures built in the 19th and 20th centuries may exceed the number of authentic Gothic structures that had been built in Gothic’s original era. The Gothic Revival style is characterized by its stone and brick structures, many of which are religious in nature, as well as heavy decoration. The most fundamental element of the Gothic style of architecture is the pointed arch. Columns that support arches are smaller in Gothic buildings, and continue all the way to the roof, where they become part of the vault. In the vault, the pointed arch can be seen in three dimensions where the ribbed vaulting meets in the center of the ceiling of each bay. This ribbed vaulting is another distinguishing feature of Gothic architecture. The slender columns and lighter systems of thrust allowed for larger windows and more light in Gothic structures. The windows, tracery, carvings, and ribs make up a bewildering display of decoration where almost

every surface is decorated with a profusion of shapes and patterns. Gothic revival cottages and smaller buildings also became popular and are referred to as “Carpenter Gothic.” These structures are defined by their use of Gothic elements such as pointed arches and steep gables.

A. W. N. Pugin was a prominent architect, designer, artist, and critic who was deeply involved in the Gothic Revival. The height of his work is seen in the interior design of the Palace of Westminster. Pugin designed many churches in England during his career and published a series of volumes of architectural drawings entitled *Examples of Gothic Architecture* and *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* that remained in print and were the standards for the Gothic Revival for the next century.

Exterior of the Palace of Westminster: A. W. N. Pugin designed the Palace of Westminster, and was an architect, designer, artist, and critic deeply involved in the Gothic Revival.

The Gothic Revival was supported by medievalism, which had its roots in antiquarian concerns of survivals (practices that continue from earlier times) and curiosities (unique or unusual objects). As industrialization progressed, there was a reaction against machine production and factories. Proponents of the picturesque, such as Thomas Carlyle and Augustus Pugin, took a critical view of industrial society and portrayed pre-industrial medieval society as a golden age. To Pugin, Gothic architecture was infused with the Christian values that had been supplanted by classicism and were being destroyed by industrialization.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Gothic Revival architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_Revival_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Augustus Pugin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_Pugin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Gothic Experience: Gothic Architecture. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Gothic-Experience.pdf. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- gable. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gable. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- tracery. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tracery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- medievalism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/medievalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Palace of Westminster Westminster Hall south. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palace_of_Westminster_Westminster_Hall_south.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.5: The Gothic Revival is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.6: The Empire Style

Art under Napoleon

The Empire style refers to art created under the rule of Napoleon that was intended to idealize the French Empire.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the emphasis Napoleon placed on nationalism when supporting the arts

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Empire style developed and elaborated the Directoire style of the immediately preceding period, which aimed at a simpler evocation of the virtues of the Ancient Roman Republic.
- The style was predominantly propagandistic, intended to idealize Napoleon's French state. Inspiration for architectural designs drew heavily on symbols and ornaments borrowed from the ancient Greek and Roman empires. Buildings typically had simple timber frames and box-like constructions, veneered in expensive mahogany that was imported from the newly-acquired colonies.
- In Napoleonic painting, themes often revolved around the military and glorifying Napoleon's campaigns. Battle paintings were increasingly produced for large public buildings and grew larger than ever before.

Key Terms

- **Neoclassicism**: Neoclassicism is the name given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theater, music, and architecture that draw inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome.

The Empire style, considered by many to be the second phase of Neoclassicism, is an early 19th century design movement in architecture, furniture, and the decorative arts which lasted until about 1830. The style originated during the rule of Napoleon I in the First French Empire and was intended to idealize Napoleon's French state.

The Empire style developed and elaborated the Directoire style of the immediately preceding period, which aimed at a simpler but still elegant evocation of the virtues of the Ancient Roman Republic. Empire style architecture was based on aspects of the Roman Empire and its many archaeological treasures that had been rediscovered starting in the 18th century. The style was considered to have "liberated" and "enlightened" architecture just as Napoleon "liberated" the people of Europe with his Napoleonic Code. Inspiration for architectural designs drew heavily on symbols and ornaments borrowed from the ancient Greek and Roman empires. Buildings typically had simple timber frames and box-like constructions, veneered in expensive mahogany that was imported from the newly acquired colonies.

After Napoleon lost power, the Empire style continued to be in favor for many decades, with minor adaptations. The most famous Empire style structures in France are the grand neoclassical Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, Vendôme column, and La Madeleine, which were built in Paris to emulate the edifices of the Roman Empire.

The Madeleine: Église de la Madeleine in Paris, a Temple to the Glory of Napoleon's Grande Armée. This structure reflects the Empire style of architecture in its emulation of ancient Greco-Roman facades, especially in its extensive use of Greek columns.

In Napoleonic painting, themes often revolved around the military and the glorification of Napoleon's campaigns. Battle paintings were increasingly produced for large public buildings and grew larger in size than ever before. Baron Gros painted mostly glorifications of Napoleon and his victories, but his 1808 painting of the Battle of Eylau does not neglect the suffering of the dead and wounded on the frozen battlefield. In contrast, Goya's large paintings *The Second of May 1808* and *The Third of May 1808* emphasized the brutality of the French forces during the Peninsular War in Spain.

Bataille d´Aboukir, 25 juillet 1799, 1806: By Antoine-Jean Gros, representative of Empire-style painting, which depicted Napoleon on the battlefield as a conquering victor.

The Empire Style

The Empire Style reflects Napoleon's desire to reshape France in the model of the Roman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Explain some of the attributes of the Empire style

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Empire Style, which takes its name from the First Empire period of France, manifested itself in the visual and decorative arts.
- Major building projects undertaken in Paris in the Empire Style include the Church of the Madeleine, intended as a temple to Napoleon's army.

- The Vendôme Column, crafted from enemy cannons after Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, was produced in the style of Trajan's Column in Rome.
- Napoleon's throne, on which he sits in a portrait by Ingres, framed the emperor's head like a halo and contained laurel crown encircling his first initial to commemorate his victories in battle.

The Empire style, which takes its name from the First Empire overseen by Napoleon Bonaparte, is an early 19th century design movement in the decorative arts and the visual arts that flourished between 1800 and 1815 during the Consulate and the First French Empire periods. Art forms from this period reflect Napoleon's desire to remake France in the image of the Roman Empire. The style corresponds politically to the Biedermeier style in the German-speaking lands, Federal style in the United States, and the Regency style in Britain.

La Madeleine

Architecture of the Empire style was based on elements of the Roman Empire and its many archaeological treasures, which had been rediscovered starting in the 18th century. The style was considered to have "liberated" and "enlightened" architecture just as Napoleon "liberated" the peoples of Europe with his Napoleonic Code. One example of this symbolism lies in the Église Sainte-Marie Madeleine in Paris (Church of St. Mary Magdalene). Although this building is a church, it more closely resembles a classical temple, combining elements from ancient Greece (origin of democracy and Western philosophy) and Rome (a republic turned empire). It was designed in its present form as a temple to the glory of Napoleon's army.

Pierre-Alexandre Vignon. L'Église Sainte-Marie Madeleine (1807–28): This temple to Napoleon's army combines elements from ancient Greek and Roman temples.

Vendôme Column

The Vendôme Column, located in the Place de la Vendôme in Paris, was started in 1806 at Napoleon's direction and completed in 1810. It was modeled after Trajan's Column, to celebrate the victory of Austerlitz. However, while Trajan's Column was sculpted from marble, the veneer of the Vendôme Column consists of 425 spiraling bas-relief bronze plates made from cannons taken from the combined armies of Europe, according to his propaganda. A statue of Napoleon, bare-headed, crowned with laurels, and holding a sword in his right hand and a globe surmounted with a statue of Victory in his left hand, was placed atop the column.

Pierre-Nolasque Bergeret. Vendôme Column. (1806): While Bergeret designed the column, its execution was carried out by Jean-Joseph Foucou, Louis-Simon Boizot, François Joseph Bosio, Lorenzo Bartolini, Claude Ramey, François Rude, Corbet, Clodion and Henri-Joseph Ruxthiel.

Napoleon's Throne

Napoleon's throne, on which he sits in a well-known portrait by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, consists of blue cushions and gilded armrests ending in ivory balls. Encircling the N on the arm of the throne is a laurel crown, a symbol of victory in Imperial Rome.

Throne of Napoleon: The circular back, ornate decoration, and the emperor's first initial encircled by a laurel crown combine to turn this piece of furniture into an object of propaganda.

As seen in the portrait, the circular back framed the emperor's head like a halo or sun ray, reminiscent of a section of Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (housed in the Louvre) depicting God the Father.

Napoleon I on His Imperial Throne by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1806): The gilded trim of Napoleon's throne circles the emperor's head.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Military art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Military art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_art%23Renaissance_to_Napoleonic_Wars. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Empire style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antoine-Jean Gros - Bataille d'Aboukir, 25 juillet 1799 - Google Art Project. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine-Jean_Gros_-_Bataille_d'Aboukir,_25_juillet_1799_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Madeleine, Paris, France, ca. 1890-1900. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Madeleine,_Paris,_France,_ca._1890-1900.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_I_on_his_Imperial_Throne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Place Vendu00f4me. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: goo.gl/xLal5x. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- La Madeleine, Paris. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Madeleine,_Paris. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Napoleon I on His Imperial Throne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_I_on_his_Imperial_Throne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Empire Style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Laurel Wreath. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel_wreath. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Antoine-Jean Gros - Bataille d'Aboukir, 25 juillet 1799 - Google Art Project. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine-Jean_Gros_-_Bataille_d'Aboukir,_25_juillet_1799_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- The Madeleine, Paris, France, ca. 1890-1900. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Madeleine,_Paris,_France,_ca._1890-1900.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 640px-Madeleine_Paris.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15440100. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 320px-Paris_Colonne_Vendu00f4me_2012_1.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21279352. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 313px-Napoleon-Throne.480.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=252820. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 296px-Ingres,_Napoleon_on_his_Imperial_throne.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=130640. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.6: The Empire Style is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.7: Academic Art

Academic Architecture

Beaux-Arts architecture expressed the academic neoclassical architectural style that was taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Learning Objectives

Define the characteristics of “Beaux Arts” in France

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- “Beaux Arts” describes the architectural style of over two centuries of instruction under academic authority: first, of the Académie royale d’architecture (1671–1793), then, following the French Revolution, the Architecture section of the Académie des Beaux-Arts.
- Beaux-Arts academic training emphasized the mainstream examples of Imperial Roman architecture, Italian Renaissance, and French and Italian Baroque models.
- Beaux-Arts architecture depended on sculptural decoration along conservative modern lines, combined with an impressionistic finish. Slightly overscaled details, bold sculptural supporting consoles, rich deep cornices, swags, and lavish sculptural enrichments, all flourished in the Beaux-Arts style.

Key Terms

- **Beaux-Arts Architecture**: Beaux-Arts architecture expresses the academic neoclassical architectural style taught at the cole des Beaux-Arts inParis.

Beaux-Arts architecture expresses the academic neoclassical architectural style taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. “Beaux Arts” describes the architectural style of over two centuries of instruction under academic authority: first, of the Académie royale d’architecture (1671–1793), then, following the French Revolution, the Architecture section of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. The style of instruction that produced Beaux-Arts architecture continued without major interruption until 1968. The Beaux-Arts style had widespread influence outside of France, including on the architecture of the United States in the period from 1880–1920.

Beaux-Arts academic training emphasized the mainstream examples of Imperial Roman architecture, Italian Renaissance, and French and Italian Baroque models. Beaux-Arts training made great use of agrafes (clasps that link one architectural detail to another), interpenetration of forms, and “speaking architecture” (architecture parlante) in which supposed appropriateness of symbolism could be taken to literal-minded extremes. Beaux-Arts training also emphasized the production of quick conceptual sketches, highly-finished perspective presentation drawings, close attention to the program, and knowledgeable detailing. Site considerations tended toward social and urbane contexts. All architects-in-training passed through the obligatory stages—studying antique models, constructing analos, analyses reproducing Greek or Roman models, “pocket” studies and other conventional steps—in the long competition for the few desirable places at the Académie de France à Rome.

Beaux-Arts architecture depended on sculptural decoration along conservative modern lines, employing French and Italian Baroque and Rococo formulas, combined with an impressionistic finish and realism. Slightly overscaled details, bold sculptural supporting consoles, rich deep cornices, swags, and lavish sculptural enrichments, all flourished in the Beaux-Arts style, as demonstrated in the Opera Garnier in Paris.

Opera Garnier: The Palais Garnier (1861-75) is an exemplar of the Beaux Arts style.

Though the Beaux-Arts style embodies an approach to a regenerated spirit within the grand traditions rather than a set of motifs, principal characteristics of Beaux-Arts architecture included: rusticated and raised first stories, a hierarchy of spaces (from “noble spaces”—grand entrances and staircases— to utilitarian ones) arched windows, arched and pedimented doors, classical details, references to a synthesis of historicist styles, and tendency to eclecticism. Statuary, sculpture (including bas-relief panels, figural sculptures, sculptural groups), murals, mosaics, and other artwork, all coordinated in theme to assert the identity of the building in Beaux-Arts architecture. After centuries of dominating architectural schools and training processes, the Beaux-Arts style began fade in favor of Modernist architecture and the International Style on the eve of World War I.

Diana and Pomona: Images of the Goddesses Pomona (left) and Diana (right) together decorate the entrance to The Peninsula Hotel, occupying a Beaux-Arts building at Fifth Ave. and 55th St., New York City. Here, Pomona (Goddess of Orchards) carries a cornucopia; in other images she is represented carrying a platter of fruit. Diana, as Goddess of the Hunt, carries her usual bow and arrows. Note the naturalism of the postures and the channeled rustication of the stonework.

Academic Painting and Sculpture

Academic art is a style of painting and sculpture produced under the influence of European academies of art.

Learning Objectives

Relate the painting and sculpture of Academia to the Neoclassicist and Romantic movements of the era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture had a considerable impact on the subjects and styles of academic art for several centuries.

- The trend in academic art was towards greater idealism, contrary to realism, so that figures could represent the ideals they stood for.
- Academic Art exhibitions were held often, and the most popular exhibition was the Paris Salon and beginning in 1903, the Salon d'Automne.

Key Terms

- **Neoclassicism**: Neoclassicism is the name given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theater, music, and architecture that draw inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome.
- **Rococo**: Rococo, also referred to as Late Baroque, is an 18th century artistic movement and style that affected several aspects of the arts, including painting, sculpture, architecture, interior design, decoration, literature, music, and theater.
- **Romanticism**: 18th century artistic and intellectual movement that stressed emotion, freedom and individual imagination

Academic art is a style of painting and sculpture produced under the influence of European academies of art; more specifically, it is the art and artists influenced by the standards of the French Académie des Beaux-Arts, which practiced under the movements of Neoclassicism and Romanticism. In this context it is often called academism, academicism, L'art pompier, and eclecticism, and sometimes linked with historicism and syncretism.

Background

The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture was founded in France in 1648, and later became the Académie des Beaux-Arts. After the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture was reorganized in 1661 by Louis XIV, a controversy occurred among the members that dominated artistic attitudes for the rest of the century. This "battle of styles" was a conflict over who was a suitable model to follow—Peter Paul Rubens or Nicolas Poussin. Followers of Poussin, called "poussinistes," argued that line (disegno) should dominate art because of its appeal to the intellect, while followers of Rubens, called "rubenistes," argued that color (colore) should dominate art because of its appeal to emotion. The debate was revived in the early 19th century, under the movements of neoclassicism typified by the artwork of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, and romanticism typified by the artwork of Eugène Delacroix. Debates also occurred over whether it was better to study art by looking at nature, or to learn by looking at the artistic masters of the past. Academies using the French model formed throughout Europe, and imitated the teachings and styles of the French.

Subject Matter

The trend in academic art was towards greater idealism: contrary to realism, figures were made simpler and more abstract—idealized—in order to represent the ideals they stood in for. Hence, many paintings by academic artists are simple nature allegories with titles like Dawn, Dusk, Seeing, and Tasting, where these ideas are personified by a single nude figure, composed in such a way as to bring out the essence of the idea. This would involve both generalizing forms seen in nature, and subordinating them to the unity and theme of the artwork.

Because history and mythology were considered fertile ground for important allegory, using themes from these subjects was considered the most serious form of painting. A hierarchy of genres, originally created in the 17th century, was valued, where history painting —classical, religious, mythological, literary, and allegorical subjects—was placed at the top. Next came genre painting, then portraiture, still-life, and finally landscape. History painting was also known as the "grande genre." During the reign of academic art, the paintings of the Rococo era that had previously been held in low favor were revived to popularity, and themes often used in Rococo art such as Eros and Psyche were popular again. The academic art world also idolized Raphael for the ideality of his work.

Birth of Venus by Alexandre Cabanel, 1863: Academic Art, especially in the Neoclassical period, typically used Roman and Greek allegories and simple nudes to depict idealized forms.

Salons

Academic Art exhibitions were held often. The most popular exhibition was the Paris Salon, and beginning in 1903, the Salon d'Automne. These salons were sensational events that attracted crowds of visitors, both native and foreign. As much a social affair as an artistic one, 50,000 people might visit on a single Sunday, and as many as 500,000 could see the exhibition during its two-month run. Thousands of pictures were displayed, hung from just below eye level all the way up to the ceiling in a manner now known as "Salon style." A successful showing at the salon was a seal of approval for an artist, making his work saleable to the growing ranks of private collectors.

Criticisms

Academic art was first criticized by realist artists for its use of idealism: based on idealistic clichés and representing mythical and legendary motives while contemporary social concerns were being ignored. Another criticism by realists was the "false surface" of paintings: the objects depicted looked smooth, slick, and idealized, showing no real texture. Similarly, perspective was constructed geometrically on a flat surface and was not really the product of sight.

This Year, Venuses Again…Always Venuses!: Honoré Daumier, No. 2 from series in Le Charivati, 1864. A caricature (French bourgeoisie) mocking Academic Art's use of idealized form and mythical allegories, while ignoring contexts of daily or modern life.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Beaux-Arts architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaux-Arts_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Beaux-Arts Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaux-Arts%20Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- DianaAndPomona. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DianaAndPomona.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Facade opera Garnier. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Facade_opera_Garnier.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Academic art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neoclassicism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Romanticism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Romanticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Rococo. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- DianaAndPomona. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DianaAndPomona.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Facade opera Garnier. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Facade_opera_Garnier.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- This Year Venuses Again (Daumier). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:This_Year_Venuses_Again_(Daumier).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cabanel - El Nacimiento de Venus (Museo de Orsay, Paru00eds, 1863.nu00d3leo sobre lienzo, 130 x 225 cm). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cabanel_-_El_Nacimiento_de_Venus_(Museo_de_Orsay,_Par%C3%ADs,_1863._%C3%93leo_sobre_lienzo,_130_x_225_cm).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.7: Academic Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.8: Realism

Realism

Realism, an artistic movement that began in France in the 1850s, rejected Romanticism, seeking instead to portray contemporary subjects and situations with truth and accuracy.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the key thoughts of Realism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Realists revolted against the exotic subject matter and exaggerated emotionalism of the Romanticism that had dominated French literature and art since the late 18th century.
- Realist works depicted people of all classes in ordinary life situations, which often reflected the changes brought on by the Industrial and Commercial Revolutions.
- Realists tended to showcase sordid or untidy elements in their paintings.
- Important figures in the Realist art movement were Gustave Courbet, Honore Daumier, and Jean-Francois Millet.

Realism was an artistic movement that began in France in the 1850s, following the 1848 Revolution. Realists rejected Romanticism, which had dominated French literature and art since the late 18th century, revolting against the exotic subject matter and exaggerated emotionalism of the movement. Instead, Realists sought to portray "real" contemporary people and situations with truth and accuracy, including all the unpleasant or sordid aspects of life. Realist works depicted people of all classes in ordinary life situations, which often reflected the changes brought on by the Industrial and Commercial Revolutions.

The Realists depicted everyday subjects and situations in contemporary settings, and attempted to depict individuals of all social classes in a similar manner. Classical idealism, Romantic emotionalism, and drama were avoided equally, and often sordid or untidy elements of subjects were showcased somewhat, as opposed to being beautified or omitted. Social realism emphasized the depiction of the working class and treated working class people with the same seriousness as other classes in art. Realism also aimed to avoid artificiality in the treatment of human relations and emotions; treatments of subjects in a heroic or sentimental manner were rejected. Important figures in the Realist art movement were Gustave Courbet, Honore Daumier, and Jean-Francois Millet.

A Burial At Ornans by Gustave Courbet, 1849: Courbet is regarded as the leading proponent of the Realist movement.

Realism in Painting

Two important figures in the Realist movement were Gustave Courbet and Jean-Francois Millet.

Learning Objectives

Describe how Realist ideals manifest in Realist painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Realism arose in opposition to Romanticism, which had dominated French literature and art since the late 18th century.
- Realist painters often depicted common laborers, and ordinary people in ordinary surroundings engaged in real activities as subjects for their works.
- Gustave Courbet is known as the main proponent of Realism and his paintings challenged convention by depicting unidealized peasants and workers, often on a grand scale traditionally reserved for paintings of religious or historical subjects.
- Jean-Francois Millet is noted for his scenes of peasant farmers of which "The Gleaners" is one of his most well-known due to its depiction of the realities of the lower class.

Realism was an artistic movement that began in France in the 1850s, after the 1848 Revolution. The movement arose in opposition to Romanticism, which had dominated French literature and art since the late 18th century. Realism revolted against the exotic subject matter and exaggerated emotionalism and drama typical of the Romantic movement. In favor of depictions of real life, Realist painters often depicted common laborers, and ordinary people in ordinary surroundings engaged in real activities as subjects for their works. The chief exponents of Realism were Gustave Courbet, Jean-François Millet, Honoré Daumier, and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot.

Gustave Courbet

Jean Désiré Gustave Courbet (1819–December 31, 1877) was a French painter who led the Realist movement in 19th century French painting. Rejecting the predominant academic convention and the Romanticism of his time, Courbet's independence set an example that was important to later artists, such as the Impressionists and the Cubists. As an artist, he occupies an important place in 19th century French painting as an innovator and as an artist willing to make bold social statements in his work.

Courbet's paintings of the late 1840s and early 1850s brought him his first recognition. They challenged convention by depicting unidealized peasants and workers, often on a grand scale traditionally reserved for paintings of religious or historical subjects. Courbet courted controversy by addressing social issues in his work, and by painting subjects that were considered vulgar, such as the rural bourgeoisie, peasants, and working conditions of the poor. For Courbet realism dealt not with the perfection of line and form, but entailed spontaneous and rough handling of paint, suggesting direct observation by the artist while portraying the irregularities in nature. He depicted the harshness in life, and in so doing challenged contemporary academic ideas of art.

A Burial at Ornans by Gustave Courbet, 1849–50: Exhibition of this piece at the 1850–1851 Paris Salon created an "explosive reaction" and brought Courbet instant fame.

A Burial at Ornans was a vast painting, measuring 10 by 22 feet (3.1 by 6.6 meters), and drew both praise and fierce denunciations from critics and the public, in part because it upset convention by depicting a prosaic ritual on a scale that previously would have been reserved for a religious or royal subject. Additionally, the painting lacks the sentimental rhetoric that was expected in a genre

work. Courbet's mourners make no theatrical gestures of grief, and their faces seemed more caricatured than ennobled. The critics accused Courbet of a deliberate pursuit of ugliness.

Jean-Francois Millet

Jean-François Millet (October 4, 1814–January 20, 1875) was a French painter and one of the founders of the Barbizon School in rural France. Millet is noted for his scenes of peasant farmers and can be categorized as part of the Realism art movement.

Woman Baking Bread by Jean-Francois Millet, 1854: This painting depicts a woman working in the home, and is a typical representation of the Realists' engagement with depicting the realities of life at the time.

One of the most well known of Millet's paintings is *The Gleaners* (1857). While Millet was walking the fields around Barbizon, one theme returned to his pencil and brush for seven years—gleaning—the centuries-old right of poor women and children to remove the bits of grain left in the fields following the harvest. He found the theme an eternal one, linked to stories from the Old Testament. In 1857, he submitted the painting *The Gleaners* to the Salon to an unenthusiastic, even hostile, public.

Gleaners by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857: One of his most controversial, this painting by Millet depicts gleaners collecting grain in the fields near his home. The depiction of the realities of the lower class was considered shocking to the public at the time.

Pre-Raphaelites

The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of English painters, poets, and critics, founded in 1848.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the ideas that underpinned the Pre-Raphaelites and how they were manifested in their art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Pre-Raphaelites sought to reform art by rejecting what they considered to be a mechanistic approach first adopted by the Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo.
- They believed the Classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the name "Pre-Raphaelite." They wanted a return to the abundant detail, intense colors and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian art.
- Influenced by romanticism, the Pre-Raphaelites thought freedom and responsibility were inseparable. Nevertheless, they were particularly fascinated by medieval culture, believing it to possess a spiritual and creative integrity that had been lost in later eras.
- In later years the movement divided and moved in two separate directions. The realists were led by Hunt and Millais, while the medievalists were led by Rossetti and his followers, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.

Key Terms

- **Mannerist**: An artist who uses Mannerism, a style of European art that emerged from the later years of the Italian High Renaissance around 1520.
- **quattrocento**: The 1400s, the 15th century Renaissance Italian period.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (also known as the Pre-Raphaelites) was a group of English painters, poets, and critics, founded in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The three founders were soon joined by William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens and Thomas Woolner to form a seven-member brotherhood. The group's intention was to reform art by rejecting an approach that they considered mechanistic, one that was first adopted by the Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo. Its members believed the Classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the name "Pre-Raphaelite." The Pre-

Raphaelites wanted a return to the abundant detail, intense colors and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian and Flemish art. The Pre-Raphaelites defined themselves as a reform movement, created a distinct name for their form of art, and published a periodical, The Germ, to promote their ideas.

The brotherhood's early doctrines emphasized the personal responsibility of individual artists to determine their own ideas and methods of depiction. Influenced by Romanticism, the Pre-Raphaelites thought freedom and responsibility were inseparable. Nevertheless, they were particularly fascinated by medieval culture, believing it to possess a spiritual and creative integrity that had been lost in later eras.

Pre-Raphaelites and Realism

The emphasis on medieval culture clashed with principles of realism, which stressed the independent observation of nature. In its early stages, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood believed its two interests were consistent with one another, but in later years the movement divided and moved in two separate directions. The realists were led by Hunt and Millais, while the medievalists were led by Rossetti and his followers, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. The split was never absolute, since both factions believed that art was essentially spiritual in character, opposing their idealism to the materialist realism associated with Courbet and impressionism.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was greatly influenced by nature and its members used great detail to show the natural world using bright and sharp focus techniques on a white canvas. In attempts to revive the brilliance of color found in Quattrocento art, Hunt and Millais developed a technique of painting in thin glazes of pigment over a wet white ground in the hope that the colors would retain jewel-like transparency and clarity. Their emphasis on brilliance of color was a reaction to the excessive use of bitumen by earlier British artists. Bitumen produces unstable areas of muddy darkness, an effect the Pre-Raphaelites despised.

Ophelia: Ophelia, by John Everett Millais, reflects the Pre-Raphaelite use of brilliance of color in composition.

Exhibitions

The first exhibitions of Pre-Raphaelite work occurred in 1849. Both Millais's *Isabella* (1848–1849) and Holman Hunt's *Rienzi* (1848–1849) were exhibited at the Royal Academy. Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* was shown at a Free Exhibition on Hyde Park Corner. As agreed, all members of the brotherhood signed their work with their name and the initials "PRB."

In 1850 the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood became the subject of controversy after the exhibition of Millais's painting, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, which was considered to be blasphemous by many reviewers, notably Charles Dickens. The brotherhood's medievalism was attacked as backward-looking and its extreme devotion to detail was condemned as ugly and jarring to the eye. According to Dickens, Millais made the Holy Family look like alcoholics and slum-dwellers, adopting contorted and absurd "medieval" poses.

Christ in the House of His Parents: Pre-Raphaelite Millais's painting, Christ in the House of His Parents, was considered to be blasphemous by many reviewers, notably Charles Dickens, who said Millais made the Holy Family look like alcoholics and slum-dwellers, adopting contorted and absurd "medieval" poses.

After 1856, Dante Gabriel Rossetti became an inspiration for the medievalizing strand of the movement. He was the link between the two types of Pre-Raphaelite painting (nature and romance) after the PRB became lost in the late 1800s. Rossetti, although the least committed to the brotherhood, continued the name and changed its style. He began painting versions of women using models like Jane Morris, in paintings such as *Proserpine*, after the Pre-Raphaelites had disbanded.

Since the Pre-Raphaelites were fixed on portraying subjects with near-photographic precision—though with a distinctive attention to detailed surface-patterns—their work was devalued by many painters and critics. For instance, after the First World War, British Modernists associated Pre-Raphaelite art with the repressive and backward times in which they grew up.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Realism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_(art_movement). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_(art_movement)#/media/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jean-Francois Millet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave Courbet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Courbet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_(art_movement)#/media/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jean-Francu0327ois_Millet_II_005.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Millet_Gleaners.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Millet_Gleaners.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Courbet#/media/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Raphaelite_Brotherhood. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Mannerist. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Mannerist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- quattrocento. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quattrocento. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_(art_movement)#/media/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jean-Francu0327ois_Millet_II_005.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Millet_Gleaners.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Millet_Gleaners.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Courbet#/media/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_A_Burial_at_Ornans_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- John Everett Millais - Ophelia - Google Art Project. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:John_Everett_Millais_-_Ophelia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Millais-christ-in-the-house-of-his-parents. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Millais-christ-in-the-house-of-his-parents.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.8: Realism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.9: Impressionism

Impressionism

Impressionism is a 19th century movement known for its paintings that aimed to depict the transience of light, and to capture scenes of modern life and the natural world in their ever-shifting conditions.

Learning Objectives

Identify the characteristics of Impressionism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The term ” impressionism ” is derived from the title of Claude Monet’s painting, *Impression, soleil levant* (“Impression, Sunrise”).
- Impressionist works characteristically portray overall visual effects instead of details, and use short, “broken” brush strokes of mixed and unmixed color to achieve an effect of intense color vibration.
- During the latter part of 1873, Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, and Sisley organized the Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs (“Cooperative and Anonymous Association of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers”) to exhibit their artworks independently to mixed critical response.
- The Impressionists exhibited together eight times between 1874 and 1886. The individual artists achieved few financial rewards from the impressionist exhibitions, but their art gradually won a degree of public acceptance and support.
- Impressionists typically painted scenes of modern life and often painted outdoors or *en plein air*.

Key Terms

- **En Plein air**: En plein air is a French expression that means “in the open air,” and is particularly used to describe the act of painting outdoors, which is also called peinture sur le motif (“painting on the ground”) in French.
- **Vista**: From Italian vista (“view, sight”). A distant view or prospect, especially one seen through an opening, avenue, or passage.
- **flâneur**: A man who observes society, usually in urban settings; a “people-watcher.”

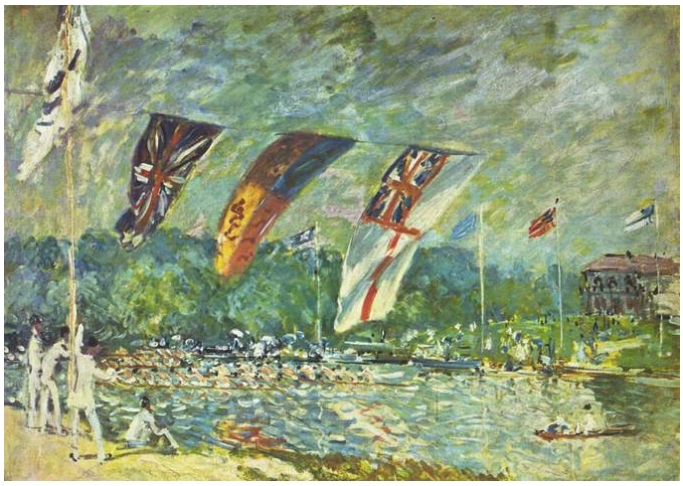
Impressionism is a 19th century art movement that was originated by a group of Paris-based artists, including Berthe Morisot, Claude Monet, August Renoir, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, and Alfred Sisley, as well as the American artist Mary Cassatt. These artists constructed their pictures with freely brushed colors that took precedence over lines and contours. They typically painted scenes of modern life and often painted outdoors. The Impressionists found that they could capture the momentary and transient effects of sunlight by painting *en plein air*. However, many Impressionist paintings and prints, especially those produced by Morisot and Cassatt, are set in domestic interiors. Typically, they portrayed overall visual effects instead of details, and used short, “broken” brush strokes of mixed and unmixed color to achieve an effect of intense color vibration.

London, Houses of Parliament. The Sun Shining through the Fog, Claude Monet, 1904: Monet is considered the most consistent and prolific practitioner of the Impressionist philosophy of expressing one's perceptions before nature.

Radicals in their time, early impressionists violated the rules of academic painting. In 19th century France, the Académie des Beaux-Arts ("Academy of Fine Arts") dominated French art. The Académie was the preserver of traditional French painting standards of content and style. Historical subjects, religious themes, and portraits were valued (landscape and still life were not), and the Académie preferred carefully finished images that looked realistic when examined closely. Color was somber and conservative, and traces of brush strokes were suppressed, concealing the artist's personality, emotions, and working techniques.

Impressionist painters could not afford to wait for France to accept their work, so they established their own exhibition—apart from the annual salon organized by the Académie. During the latter part of 1873, Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, and Sisley organized the Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs ("Cooperative and Anonymous Association of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers") to exhibit their artworks independently. In total, 30 artists participated in their first exhibition, held in April 1874 at the studio of the French photographer and caricaturist Nadar.

The critical response was mixed. Critic and humorist Louis Leroy wrote a scathing review in the newspaper Le Charivari in which, making wordplay with the title of Claude Monet's *Impression, soleil levant* ("Impression, Sunrise"), he gave the artists the name by which they became known. The term "impressionists" quickly gained favor with the public. It was also accepted by the artists themselves, even though they were a diverse group in style and temperament, unified primarily by their spirit of independence and rebellion. They exhibited together eight times between 1874 and 1886. The individual artists achieved few financial rewards from the impressionist exhibitions, but their art gradually won a degree of public acceptance and support. Their dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, played a major role in this as he kept their work before the public and arranged shows for them in London and New York.



Les régates à Moseley by Alfred Sisley, oil on canvas, 1874: Sisley was dedicated to painting landscape *en plein air* and his work is known for capturing the transient effects of sunlight.

The Impressionists captured ordinary subjects, engaged in day to day activities in both rural and urban settings. Impressionist artists relaxed the boundary between subject and background so that the effect of an impressionist painting often resembles a snapshot, a part of a larger reality captured as if by chance.

The development of Impressionism can be considered partly as a reaction by artists to the challenge presented by photography, which seemed to devalue the artist's skill in reproducing reality. In spite of this, photography actually inspired artists to pursue other means of artistic expression, and rather than compete with photography to emulate reality, impressionists sought to express their perceptions of nature and modern city life.

Scenes from the bourgeois care-free lifestyle, as well as from the world of entertainment, such as cafés, dance halls, and theaters were among their favorite subjects. In their genre scenes of contemporary life, these artists tried to arrest a moment in their fast-paced lives by pinpointing specific atmospheric conditions such as light flickering on water, moving clouds, or city lights falling over dancing couples. Their technique tried to capture what they saw.

Pontoise by Camille Pissarro, oil on canvas, 1867: Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) was a stylistic forerunner of Impressionism known for his landscapes and for capturing the daily reality of village life.

Manet

Édouard Manet, a French painter, was a pivotal figure in the transition from Realism to Impressionism.

Learning Objectives

Express why Édouard Manet is considered a pivotal figure in the transition from Realism to Impressionism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- His early masterworks, *The Luncheon on the Grass (Le déjeuner sur l'herbe)* and Olympia, engendered great controversy and served as rallying points for the young painters who would create Impressionism. Today, these are considered watershed paintings that mark the genesis of modern art.
- His style in this period was characterized by loose brush strokes, simplification of details, and the suppression of transitional tones.
- Manet's works were seen as a challenge to the Renaissance works that inspired his paintings. Manet's work is considered "early modern," partially because of the black outlining of figures, which draws attention to the surface of the picture plane and the material quality of paint.

Key Terms

- **juxtaposition**: The extra emphasis given to a comparison when the contrasted objects are close together.
- **Impressionism**: A 19th century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists. Impressionist painting characteristics include relatively small, thin, yet visible brush strokes, open composition, emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time), common, ordinary subject matter, inclusion of movement as a crucial element of human perception and experience, and unusual visual angles.

Édouard Manet (1832–1883) was a French painter. One of the first 19th century artists to approach modern and postmodern-life subjects, he was a pivotal figure in the transition from Realism to Impressionism. His early masterworks, *The Luncheon on the Grass* (*Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*) and *Olympia*, engendered great controversy and served as rallying points for the young painters who would create Impressionism. Today, these are considered watershed paintings that mark the genesis of modern art.

Manet opened a studio in 1856. His style in this period was characterized by loose brush strokes, simplification of details, and the suppression of transitional tones. Adopting the current style of realism initiated by Gustave Courbet, he painted *The Absinthe Drinker* (1858–59) and other contemporary subjects such as beggars, singers, Gypsies, people in cafés, and bullfights. *Music in the Tuileries* is an early example of Manet's painterly style. Inspired by Hals and Velázquez, it is a harbinger of his lifelong interest in the subject of leisure.

Music in the Tuileries, 1862: One of Manet's earliest works that demonstrates his interest in loose bush strokes and the leisurely social activities of 19th century Parisians.

The Paris Salon rejected *The Luncheon on the Grass* for exhibition in 1863. Manet exhibited it at the Salon des Refusés (Salon of the Rejected) later in the year. The painting's juxtaposition of fully dressed men and a nude woman was controversial, as was its abbreviated, sketch-like handling, an innovation that distinguished Manet from Courbet. At the same time, this composition reveals

Manet's study of the old Renaissance masters. One work cited by scholars as an important precedent for *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* is Giorgione's *The Tempest*.

The Luncheon on the Grass (Le déjeuner sur l'herbe) by Édouard Manet, 1863: The painting depicts the juxtaposition of a female nude and a scantily dressed female bather on a picnic with two fully dressed men in a rural setting. Rejected by the Salon jury of 1863, Manet seized the opportunity to exhibit this and two other paintings in the 1863 Salon des Refusés, where the painting sparked public notoriety and controversy.

As he had in *The Luncheon on the Grass*, Manet again paraphrased a respected work by a Renaissance artist in his painting *Olympia* (1863), a nude portrayed in pose that was based on Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538). Manet created *Olympia* in response to a challenge to give the Salon a nude painting to display. His subsequently frank depiction of a self-assured prostitute was accepted by the Paris Salon in 1865, where it created a scandal.

Olympia by Édouard Manet, 1863: Manet's *Olympia* was a controversial painting at the time due to the confrontational gaze of the woman depicted and also to the fact that numerous details in the painting signify that she is a prostitute.

The painting was controversial partly because the nude is wearing some small items of clothing such as an orchid in her hair, a bracelet, a ribbon around her neck, and mule slippers, all of which accentuated her nakedness, sexuality, and comfortable courtesan lifestyle. The orchid, upswept hair, black cat, and bouquet of flowers were all recognized symbols of sexuality at the time. This

modern Venus' body is thin, counter to prevailing standards, and this lack of physical idealism rankled viewers. Olympia's body as well as her gaze is unabashedly confrontational. She defiantly looks out as her servant offers flowers from one of her male suitors. Although her hand rests on her leg, hiding her pubic area, the reference to traditional female virtue is ironic: female modesty is notoriously absent in this work. As with *Luncheon on the Grass*, the painting raised the issue of prostitution within contemporary France and the roles of women within society.

The roughly painted style and photographic lighting in these two controversial works was seen by contemporaries as modern: specifically, as a challenge to the Renaissance works Manet copied or used as source material. His work is considered "early modern," partially because of the black outlining of figures, which draws attention to the surface of the picture plane and the material quality of paint.

Impressionist Painting

Impressionist painting broke from the traditions of the Academie, favoring everyday subject matter, exaggerated color, thick paint application, and an aim to capture the movement of life as opposed to staged scenes.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Impressionist painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In the middle of the 19th century, the Académie des Beaux-Arts dominated French art, valuing historical subjects, religious themes, and portraits as opposed to landscapes or still life.
- In the early 1860s Monet, Renoir, Sisley, and Bazille met while studying under the academic artist Charles Gleyre. They discovered that they shared an interest in painting landscape and contemporary life rather than historical or mythological scenes
- Impressionist paintings can be characterized by their use of short, thick strokes of paint that quickly capture a subject's essence rather than details.
- Impressionist paintings do not exploit the transparency of thin paint films (glazes), which earlier artists manipulated carefully to produce effects.
- Thematically, Impressionists works are focused on capturing the movement of life, or quick moments captured as if by snapshot.

Key Terms

- **Académie des Beaux-Arts**: The Academy was created in 1816 as a merger of the Académie de peinture et de sculpture (Academy of Painting and Sculpture, founded 1648), the Académie de musique (Academy of Music, founded in 1669) and the Académie d'architecture (Academy of Architecture, founded in 1671).

In the middle of the 19th century, the Académie des Beaux-Arts dominated French art. The Académie was the preserver of traditional French painting standards of content and style. Historical subjects, religious themes, and portraits were valued; landscape and still life were not. The Académie preferred carefully finished images that looked realistic when examined closely. Paintings in this style were made up of precise brush strokes carefully blended to hide the artist's hand in the work. Colour was restrained and often toned down further by the application of a golden varnish.

In the early 1860s, four young painters—Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Frédéric Bazille—met while studying under the academic artist Charles Gleyre. They discovered that they shared an interest in painting landscape and contemporary life rather than historical or mythological scenes. Following a practice that had become increasingly popular by mid-century, they often ventured into the countryside together to paint in the open air, or *en plein air*, but not for the purpose of making sketches to be developed into carefully finished works in the studio, as was the usual custom. By painting in sunlight directly from nature, and making bold use of the vivid synthetic pigments that had become available since the beginning of the century, they

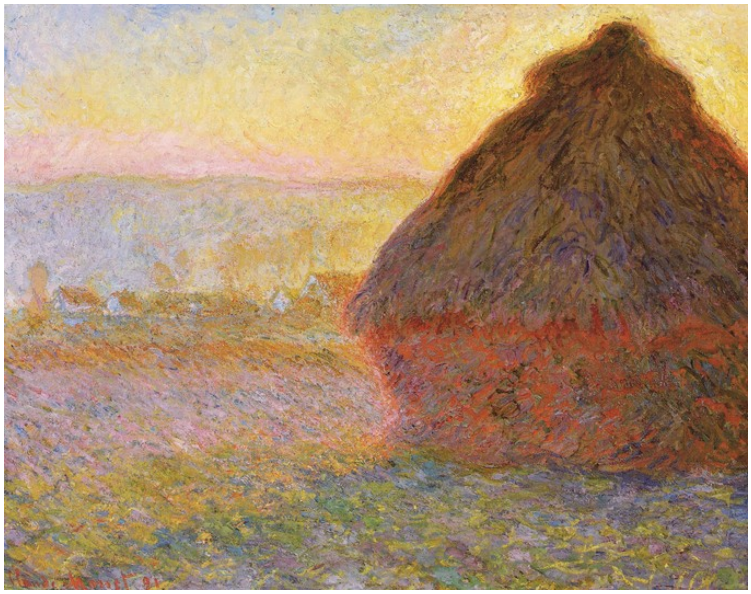
began to develop a lighter and brighter manner of painting that extended further the Realism of Gustave Courbet and the Barbizon School.

Impression, soleil levant *(Impression, Sunrise)* by Claude Monet, 1872: This painting became the source of the movement's name, given derisively by a critic but embraced by the artists and public.

Technique

Impressionist paintings can be characterized by their use of short, thick strokes of paint that quickly capture a subject's essence rather than details. Colors are often applied side-by-side with as little mixing as possible, a technique that exploits the principle of simultaneous contrast to make the color appear more vivid to the viewer. Impressionist paintings do not exploit the transparency of thin paint films (glazes), which earlier artists manipulated carefully to produce effects. Additionally, the painting surface is typically opaque and the play of natural light is emphasized.

Thematically, the Impressionists focused on capturing the movement of life, or quick moments captured as if by snapshot. The representation of light and its changing qualities were of the utmost importance. Ordinary subject matter and unusual visual angles were also important elements of Impressionist works.



Haystack, (sunset) by Claude Monet, 1890–1891: Monet's *Haystack* exemplifies the typical traits of Impressionist works with its short, quick lines making use of many opaque colors side by side in order to suggest the play of light at sunset.

Impressionist Sculpture

Modern sculpture is generally considered to have begun with the work of French sculptor Auguste Rodin.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate modern classicism in French sculpture from that of earlier classical sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Typically, modernist artists were concerned with the representation of contemporary issues as opposed to grand historical and allegorical themes previously favored in art. Rodin modeled complex, turbulent, deeply pocketed surfaces into clay and many of his most notable sculptures clashed with the predominant figure sculpture tradition, in which works were decorative, formulaic, or highly thematic. The spontaneity evident in his works associates him with the Impressionists, though he never identified as such.
- Rodin's most original work departed from traditional themes of mythology and allegory in favor of modeling the human body with realism, and celebrating individual character and physicality.
- It was the freedom and creativity with which Rodin used these practices, along with his more open attitude toward bodily pose, sensual subject matter, and non-realistic surface, that marked the re-making of traditional 19th century sculptural techniques into the prototype for modern sculpture.
- Though his work crossed many stylistic boundaries, and he did not identify as an Impressionist specifically, Degas is nonetheless regarded as one of the founders of Impressionism.
- The sculpture *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years*, by Edgar Degas c. 1881 was shown in the Impressionist Exhibition of 1881 and drew a great deal of controversy due to its departures from historical precedent, a key motive of the Impressionists.

Key Terms

- **Auguste Rodin**: Auguste Rodin was a French sculptor. Although Rodin is generally considered the progenitor of modern sculpture, he did not set out to rebel against the past. He was schooled traditionally, took a craftsman-like approach to his work, and desired academic recognition, although he was never accepted into Paris's foremost school of art.

French Sculpture

Modern classicism contrasted in many ways with the classical sculpture of the 19th century, which was characterized by commitments to naturalism, the melodramatic, sentimentality, or a kind of stately grandiosity. Several different directions in the classical tradition were taken as the century turned, but the study of the live model and the post-Renaissance tradition was still fundamental. Modern classicism showed a lesser interest in naturalism and a greater interest in formal stylization. Greater attention was paid to the rhythms of volumes and spaces—as well to the contrasting qualities of surface (open, closed, planar, broken, etc.)—while less attention was paid to storytelling and convincing details of anatomy or costume. Greater attention was given to psychological effect than to physical realism, and influences from earlier styles worldwide were used.

Modern sculpture, along with all modern art, "arose as part of Western society's attempt to come to terms with the urban, industrial and secular society that emerged during the 19th century." Typically, modernist artists were concerned with the representation of contemporary issues as opposed to grand historical and allegorical themes previously favored in art.

Rodin's Influence

Modern sculpture is generally considered to have begun with the work of French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Rodin, often considered a sculptural Impressionist, did not set out to rebel against artistic traditions, however, he incorporated novel ways of building his sculpture that defied classical categories and techniques. Specifically, Rodin modeled complex, turbulent, deeply pocketed surfaces into clay. While he never self-identified as an Impressionist, the vigorous, gestural modeling he employed in his works is often likened to the quick, gestural brush strokes aiming to capture a fleeting moment that was typical of the Impressionists. Rodin's most original work departed from traditional themes of mythology and allegory, in favor of modeling the human body with intense realism, and celebrating individual character and physicality.

Rodin was a naturalist, less concerned with monumental expression than with character and emotion. Departing with centuries of tradition, he turned away from the idealism of the Greeks and the decorative beauty of the Baroque and neo-Baroque movements. His sculpture emphasized the individual and the concreteness of flesh, suggesting emotion through detailed, textured surfaces, and the interplay of light and shadow. To a greater degree than his contemporaries, Rodin believed that an individual's character was revealed by his physical features. Rodin's talent for surface modeling allowed him to let every part of the body speak for the whole. The male's passion in *The Kiss*, for example, is suggested by the grip of his toes on the rock, the rigidness of his back, and the differentiation of his hands. Rodin saw suffering and conflict as hallmarks of modern art. He states that "nothing, really, is more moving than the maddened beast, dying from unfulfilled desire and asking in vain for grace to quell its passion."

The Thinker by Auguste Rodin: Rodin's experiments with form, visible in the Thinker, launched modern abstract sculpture.

Rodin's major innovation was to capitalize on such multi-staged processes of 19th century sculpture and their reliance on plaster casting. Since clay deteriorates rapidly if not kept wet or fired into a terra-cotta, sculptors used plaster casts as a means of securing the composition they would make out of the fugitive material that is clay. This was common practice among Rodin's contemporaries: sculptors would exhibit plaster casts with the hopes that they would be commissioned to have the works made in a more permanent material. Rodin, however, would have multiple plasters made and treat them as the raw material of sculpture, recombining their parts and figures into new compositions and new names. As Rodin's practice developed into the 1890s, he became more and more radical in his pursuit of fragmentation, the combination of figures at different scales, and the making of new compositions from his earlier work.

The Walking Man

A prime example of his radical practices is *The Walking Man* (1899–1900). It is composed of two sculptures from the 1870s that Rodin found in his studio — a broken and damaged torso that had fallen into neglect and the lower extremities of a statuette

version of his *1878 St. John the Baptist Preaching* that he was having re-sculpted at a reduced scale. Without finessing the join between upper and lower, between torso and legs, Rodin created a work that many sculptors at the time, and subsequently, have seen as one of his strongest and most singular works. This is despite the fact that the object conveys two different styles, exhibits two different attitudes toward finish, and lacks any attempt to hide the arbitrary fusion of these two components. It was the freedom and creativity with which Rodin used these practices—along with his activation of the surfaces of sculptures through traces of his own touch—that marked Rodin's re-making of traditional 19th century sculptural techniques into the prototype for modern sculpture.

The Walking Man: The Walking Man is composed of two fragments of sculpture that Rodin combined into a single work without masking the fusion of these disparate forms.

Edgar Degas

Edgar Degas was a French artist famous for his paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings. He is especially identified with the subject of dance; more than half of his works depict dancers. He is regarded as one of the founders of Impressionism, although he rejected the term, preferring to be called a Realist.

During his life, public reception of Degas's work ranged from admiration to contempt. As a promising artist in the conventional mode, Degas had a number of paintings accepted in the Salon between 1865 and 1870. He soon joined forces with the Impressionists, however, and rejected the rigid rules, judgments, and elitism of the Salon—just as the Salon and general public initially rejected the experimentalism of the Impressionists.

Degas' work was controversial, but was generally admired for its draftsmanship. His *La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans*, or *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years*, which he displayed at the sixth Impressionist Exhibition in 1881, was probably his most controversial piece; some critics decried what they thought its "appalling ugliness" while others saw in it a "blossoming." The sculpture is two-thirds life size and was originally sculpted in wax, an unusual choice of medium for the time. It is dressed in a real bodice, tutu and ballet slippers and has a wig of real hair. All but a hair ribbon and the tutu are covered in wax. The 28 bronze repetitions that appear in museums and galleries around the world today were cast after Degas' death. The tutus worn by the bronzes vary from museum to museum.

Little Dancer of Fourteen Years by Edgar Degas, c. 1881: The controversial sculpture that Degas showed in the Impressionist Exhibition of 1881 is noted for its experimentalism and breaks with tradition.

Recognized as an important artist in his lifetime, Degas is now considered one of the founders of Impressionism. Though his work crossed many stylistic boundaries, his involvement with the other major figures of Impressionism and their exhibitions, his dynamic paintings and sketches of everyday life and activities, and his bold color experiments served to finally tie him to the Impressionist movement as one of its greatest artists.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Camille Pissarro. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Camille_Pissarro. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Landscape painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pierre-Auguste Renoir. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre-Auguste_Renoir. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude Monet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Monet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Alfred Sisley. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Sisley. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/Movements. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/Movements%23Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- En Plein air. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/En%20Plein%20air. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vista. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Vista. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Flu00e2neur. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fl%C3%A2neur. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mary Cassatt. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cassatt. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Berthe Morisot. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Berthe_Morisot. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gustave Caillebotte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Caillebotte. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edgar Degas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_Degas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude Monet 015. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_015.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Alfred Sisley 050. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alfred_Sisley_050.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Camille Pissarro - Pontoise. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camille_Pissarro_-_Pontoise.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Manet. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Manet. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- juxtaposition. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/juxtaposition. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude Monet 015. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_015.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Alfred Sisley 050. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alfred_Sisley_050.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Camille Pissarro - Pontoise. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camille_Pissarro_-_Pontoise.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympia_(Manet)#/media/File:Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Manet, Edouard - Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe (The Picnic) (1). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,_Edouard_-_Le_Dejeuner_sur_l'Herbe_(The_Picnic)_(1).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- MANET - Mu00fasica en las Tulleru00edas (National Gallery, Londres, 1862). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MANET_-_M%C3%BAsica_en_las_Tuller%C3%ADas_(National_Gallery,_Londres,_1862).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude Monet 015. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_015.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Alfred Sisley 050. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alfred_Sisley_050.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Camille Pissarro - Pontoise. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camille_Pissarro_-_Pontoise.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympia_(Manet)#/media/File:Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Manet, Edouard - Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe (The Picnic) (1). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,_Edouard_-_Le_Dejeuner_sur_l'Herbe_(The_Picnic)_(1).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- MANET - Mu00fasica en las Tulleru00edas (National Gallery, Londres, 1862). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MANET_-_M%C3%BAsica_en_las_Tuller%C3%ADas_(National_Gallery,_Londres,_1862).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Claude_Monet_Impression_soleil_levant.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/5/54/Claude_Monet%2C_Impression%2C_soleil_levant.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude_Monet_-_Graystaks_I.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/d/d6/Claude_Monet_-_Graystaks_I.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Thinker. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thinker. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edgar Degas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_Degas. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture%2319th_century.2C_and_continuing_realism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modern sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture%23Modernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Auguste Rodin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Rodin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Auguste Rodin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste%20Rodin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Claude Monet 015. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_015.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Alfred Sisley 050. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alfred_Sisley_050.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Camille Pissarro - Pontoise. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camille_Pissarro_-_Pontoise.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympia_(Manet)#/media/File:Edouard_Manet_-_Olympia_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Manet, Edouard - Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe (The Picnic) (1). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Manet,_Edouard_-_Le_Dejeuner_sur_l'Herbe_(The_Picnic)_(1).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- MANET - Mu00fasica en las Tulleru00edas (National Gallery, Londres, 1862). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MANET_-_M%C3%BAsica_en_las_Tuller%C3%ADas_(National_Gallery,_Londres,_1862).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Claude_Monet_Impression_soleil_levant.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/5/54/Claude_Monet%2C_Impression%2C_soleil_levant.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claude_Monet_-_Graystaks_I.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/d/d6/Claude_Monet_-_Graystaks_I.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dancer_sculpture_by_Degas_at_the_Met.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Dancer_of_Fourteen_Years#/media/File:Dancer_sculpture_by_Degas_at_the_Met.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Thinker. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: Wikimedia. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Rodin p1070095. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rodin_p1070095.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 28.9: Impressionism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.10: The Rise of Modernism

The Rise of Modernism

Modernism was a philosophical movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that was based on an underlying belief in the progress of society.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the ideas that constitute Modernism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Among the factors that shaped modernism were the development of modern industrial societies and the rapid growth of cities, followed by the horror of World War I.
- Modernism was essentially based on a utopian vision of human life and society and a belief in progress, or moving forward.
- Modernist ideals pervaded art, architecture, literature, religious faith, philosophy, social organization, activities of daily life, and even the sciences.
- In painting, modernism is defined by Surrealism, late Cubism, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Dada, German Expressionism, and Matisse as well as the abstractions of artists like Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky, which characterized the European art scene.
- The end of modernism and beginning of postmodernism is a hotly contested issue, though many consider it to have ended roughly around 1940.

Modernism is a philosophical movement that, along with cultural trends and changes, arose from enormous transformations in Western society during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among the factors that shaped modernism were the development of modern industrial societies and the rapid growth of cities, followed by the horror of World War I.
Modernism was essentially based on a utopian vision of human life and society and a belief in progress, or moving forward. It assumed that certain ultimate universal principles or truths such as those formulated by religion or science could be used to understand or explain reality.

Modernist ideals were far-reaching, pervading art, architecture, literature, religious faith, philosophy, social organization, activities of daily life, and even the sciences. The poet Ezra Pound's 1934 injunction to "Make it new!" was the touchstone of the movement's approach towards what it saw as the now obsolete culture of the past. In this spirit, its innovations, like the stream-of-consciousness novel, atonal (or pantonal) and twelve-tone music, divisionist painting and abstract art, all had precursors in the 19th century.

In painting, during the 1920s and the 1930s and the Great Depression, modernism is defined by Surrealism, late Cubism, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Dada, German Expressionism, and Modernist and masterful color painters like Henri Matisse as well as the abstractions of artists like Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky, which characterized the European art scene. In Germany, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, and others politicized their paintings, foreshadowing the coming of World War II, while in America, modernism is seen in the form of American Scene painting and the social realism and regionalism movements that contained both political and social commentary dominated the art world.

Modernism is defined in Latin America by painters Joaquín Torres García from Uruguay and Rufino Tamayo from Mexico, while the muralist movement with Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, Pedro Nel Gómez, and Santiago Martinez Delgado, and Symbolist paintings by Frida Kahlo, began a renaissance of the arts for the region, characterized by a freer use of color and an emphasis on political messages. The end of modernism and beginning of postmodernism is a hotly contested issue, though many consider it to have ended roughly around 1940.

Les Desmoiselles D'Avignon by Picasso, 1907: Picasso is a ubiquitous example of a modernist painter.

Post-Impressionism

Post-Impression refers to a genre that rejected the naturalism of Impressionism in favor of using color and form in more expressive manners.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast Post-Impressionist techniques with those of Impressionism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Post-Impressionists extended the use of vivid colors, thick application of paint, distinctive brush strokes, and real-life subject matter, and were more inclined to emphasize geometric forms, distort forms for expressive effect, and to use unnatural or arbitrary colors in their compositions.
- Although they were often exhibited together, Post-Impressionist artists were not in agreement concerning a cohesive movement, and younger painters in the early 20th century worked in geographically disparate regions and in various stylistic categories, such as Fauvism and Cubism.
- The term " Post- Impressionism " was coined by the British artist and art critic Roger Fry in 1910, to describe the development of French art since Manet.

Key Terms

- **Post-Impressionism**: (Art) a genre of painting that rejected the naturalism of impressionism, using color and form in more expressive manners.
- **Post-Impressionist**: French art or artists belonging to a genre after Manet, which extended the style of Impressionism while rejecting its limitations; they continued using vivid colors, thick application of paint, distinctive brush strokes, and real-life subject matter, but they were more inclined to emphasize geometric forms, to distort form for expressive effect, and to use unnatural or arbitrary color.

- **post-and-lintel**: A simple construction method using a header or architrave as the horizontal member over a building void (lintel) supported at its ends by two vertical columns or pillars (posts).

Move from Naturalism

Post-Impression refers to a genre of painting that rejected the naturalism of Impressionism, in favor of using color and form in more expressive manners. The term “Post-Impressionism” was coined by the British artist and art critic Roger Fry in 1910 to describe the development of French art since Manet. Post-Impressionists extended Impressionism while rejecting its limitations. For example, they continued using vivid colors, thick application of paint, distinctive brush strokes, and real-life subject matter, but they were also more inclined to emphasize geometric forms, distort forms for expressive effect, and to use unnatural or arbitrary colors in their compositions.

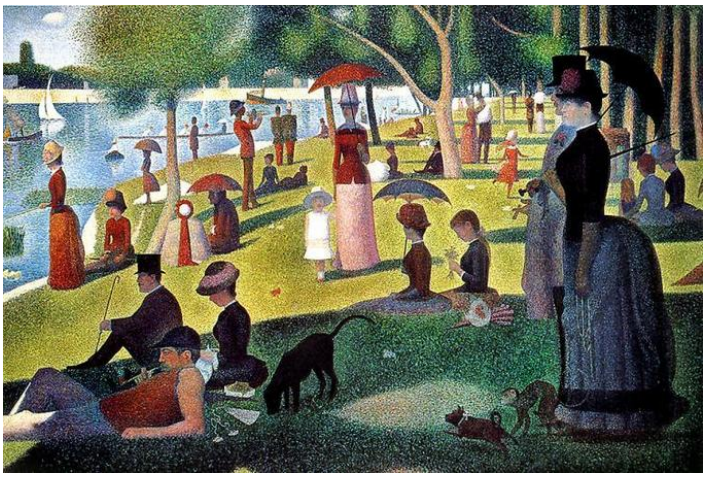
Significant Artists of Post-Impressionism

Post-Impressionism developed from Impressionism. From the 1880s onward, several artists, including Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, envisioned different precepts for the use of color, pattern, form, and line, deriving these new directions from the Impressionist example. These artists were slightly younger than the Impressionists, and their work contemporaneously became known as Post-Impressionism. Some of the original Impressionist artists also ventured into this new territory. Camille Pissarro briefly painted in a pointillist manner, and even Monet abandoned strict *en plein air* painting. Paul Cézanne, who participated in the first and third Impressionist exhibitions, developed a highly individual vision emphasizing pictorial structure; he is most often called a post-Impressionist. Although these cases illustrate the difficulty of assigning labels, the work of the original Impressionist painters may, by definition, be categorized as Impressionism.

Wheat Field with Crows by Van Gogh, 1890: Vincent Van Gogh used swirling brush strokes in many of his Post-Impressionist works.

A Diverse Search for Direction

The Post-Impressionists were dissatisfied with the triviality of subject matter and the loss of structure in Impressionist paintings, although they did not agree on the way forward. Georges Seurat and his followers, for instance, concerned themselves with Pointillism, the systematic use of tiny dots of color. Paul Cézanne set out to restore a sense of order and structure to painting by reducing objects to their basic shapes while retaining the bright fresh colors of Impressionism. Vincent van Gogh used vibrant colors and swirling brush strokes to convey his feelings and his state of mind. Hence, although they were often exhibited together, Post-Impressionist artists were not in agreement concerning a cohesive movement, and younger painters in the early 20th century worked in geographically disparate regions and in various stylistic categories, such as Fauvism and Cubism.



A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte by Georges-Pierre Seurat, 1884–86: Georges Seurat's works are Pointillist, using systematic dots of color to create form and structure.

Cézanne

Cézanne was a French, Post-Impressionist painter whose work highlights the transition from the 19th century to the early 20th century.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the evolution and influence of Cézanne's style of painting during the Post-Impressionist movement

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Cézanne's early work is often concerned with the figure in the landscape, often depicting groups of large, heavy figures. In Cézanne's mature work there is a solidified, almost architectural style of painting. To this end, he structurally ordered his perceptions into simple forms and color planes.
- This exploration rendered slightly different, yet simultaneous, visual perceptions of the same phenomena to provide the viewer with a different aesthetic experience.
- Cezanne 's "Dark Period" from 1861–1870 contains works that are characterized by dark colors and the heavy use of black.
- The lightness of his Impressionist works contrast sharply with the dramatic resignation found in his final period of productivity from 1898–1905. This resignation informs several still life paintings that depict skulls as their subject.

Key Terms

- **Cezanne**: Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) was a French artist and Post-Impressionist painter whose work laid the foundations of the transition from the 19th century conception of artistic endeavour to a new and radically different world of art in the 20th century.
- **Impressionism**: A 19th-century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists. Impressionist painting characteristics include relatively small, thin, yet visible brush strokes, open composition, emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time), common, ordinary subject matter, inclusion of movement as a crucial element of human perception and experience, and unusual visual angles.
- **Post-Impressionism**: (Art) a genre of painting that rejected the naturalism of impressionism, using color and form in more expressive manners.

Introduction

Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) was a French artist and Post- Impressionism painter whose work began the transition from the 19th century conception of artistic endeavor to a new and radically different world of art. Cézanne's often repetitive brushstrokes are

highly characteristic and clearly recognizable. He used planes of color and small brushstrokes to form complex fields and convey intense study of his subjects.

Early Work

Cézanne's early work is often concerned with the figure in the landscape, often depicting groups of large, heavy figures. Later, he became more interested in working from direct observation, gradually developing a light, airy painting style. Nevertheless, in Cézanne's mature work, there is development of a solidified, almost architectural style of painting. To this end, he structurally ordered whatever he perceived into simple forms and color planes.

Cézanne was interested in the simplification of naturally occurring forms to their geometric essentials, wanting to "treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone." For example, a tree trunk may be conceived of as a cylinder and an apple or orange as a sphere. Additionally, his desire to capture the truth of perception led him to explore binocular graphic vision. This exploration rendered slightly different, yet simultaneous, visual perceptions of the same phenomena, providing the viewer with a different aesthetic experience of depth.

Dark Period

Cezanne's "Dark Period" in 1861–1870 was comprised of works that are characterized by dark colors and the heavy use of black. They differ sharply from his earlier watercolors and sketches at the École Spéciale de dessin at Aix-en-Provence in 1859. In 1866–67, inspired by the example of Courbet, Cézanne painted a series of paintings with a palette knife. He later called these works, mostly portraits, *une couillarde* (a coarse word for ostentatious virility). All in all, works of the Dark Period include several erotic or violent subjects.

The Black Marble Clock, 1869–1871: *The Black Marble Clock*, with its heavy use of black and dark colors, exemplifies the type of work Cézanne created during his "Dark Period" in his early career.

After the start of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870, Cézanne's canvases grew much brighter and more reflective of Impressionism. Cézanne moved between Paris and Provence, exhibiting in the first (1874) and third Impressionist shows (1877). In 1875, he attracted the attention of collector Victor Chocquet, whose commissions provided some financial relief. On the whole, however, Cézanne's exhibited paintings attracted hilarity, outrage, and sarcasm.

Jas de Bouffan, 1876.: Under Pissarro's influence, Cezanne's works became much brighter and Impressionist in style.

The lightness of his Impressionist works contrast sharply with his dramatic resignation in his final period of productivity from 1898–1905. This resignation informs several still life paintings that depict skulls as their subject.

Pyramid of Skulls, c. 1901: The dramatic resignation to death informs several still life paintings Cézanne made between 1898 and 1905.

Cézanne's explorations of geometric simplification and optical phenomena inspired Picasso, Braque, Gris, and others to experiment with ever more complex multiple views of the same subject. Cézanne thus sparked one of the most revolutionary areas of artistic enquiry of the 20th century, one which was to affect the development of modern art. A prize for special achievement in the arts was created in his memory. The "Cézanne medal" is granted by the French city of Aix en Provence.

Vorticism

Vorticism, an offshoot of Cubism, was a brief modernist movement in British art and poetry of the early 20th century.

Learning Objectives

Describe the short-lived Vorticism movement in Britain

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The movement of Vorticism rejected the typical landscapes and nudes popular at the time in favor of a geometric style tending towards abstraction.
- The movement was announced in 1914 in its first issue of BLAST, Vorticism's official literary magazine, which declared the movement's manifesto.
- Vorticism diverged from Cubism and Futurism. It tried to capture movement in an image. In Vorticist paintings, modern life is shown as an array of bold lines and harsh colors drawing the viewer 's eye to the center of the canvas.

Key Terms

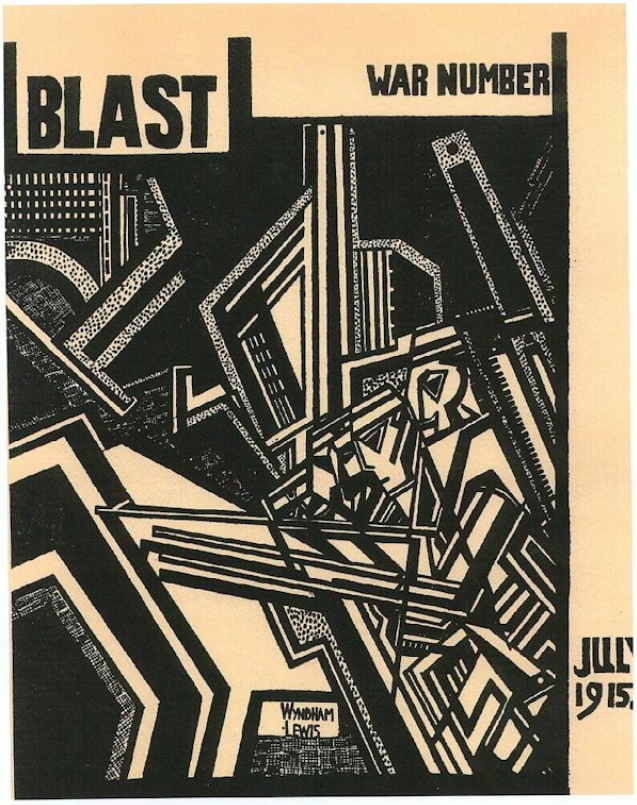
- **Industrial Revolution**: The major technological, socioeconomic, and cultural change in the late 18th and early 19th century when the economy shifted from one based on manual labor to one dominated by machine manufacture.
- **Vorticism**: An offshoot of Cubism; a short-lived modernist movement in British art and poetry of the early 20th century, based in London but international in make-up and ambition.

Vorticism was a brief modernist movement in British art and poetry during the early 20th century. It was based in London but was international in make-up and ambition. As a movement, Vorticism rejected the typical landscapes and nudes of the time in favor of a geometric style tending towards abstraction.

The Vorticism group began with the Rebel Art Centre established by Wyndham Lewis as a break with other traditional schools, and had its intellectual and artistic roots in the Bloomsbury Group, Cubism, and Futurism. Lewis saw Vorticism as an independent alternative to Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism. Though the style grew out of Cubism, it is more closely related to Futurism in its embrace of dynamism, the machine age, and all things modern. However, Vorticism diverged from both Cubism and Futurism in the way it tried to capture movement in an image. In Vorticist paintings, modern life is shown as an array of bold lines and harsh colors drawing the viewer's eye to the center of the canvas.

The Lake: Lawrence Atkinson, one of the signatories of BLAST, painted The Lake (pen and watercolor on paper) circa 1915–20 inspired by Vorticism.

The Vorticists published two issues of the literary magazine BLAST, edited by Lewis, in June 1914 and July 1915. It contained work by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and by the Vorticists themselves. Its typographical adventurousness was cited by El Lissitzky as one of the major forerunners of the revolution in graphic design in the 1920s and 1930s.



BLAST Cover: The cover of the 1915 BLAST demonstrates the Vorticist Movement's use of geometric style and sharp angles in print and design.

Paintings and sculpture shown at the Rebel Art Centre in 1914, before the formation of the Vorticist Group, were considered "experimental work" by Lewis, Wadsworth, Shakespear and others, who used angular simplification and abstraction in their paintings. This work was contemporary with and comparable to abstraction by continental European artists such as Kandinski, František Kupka, and the Russian Rayist Group. The Vorticists held only one official exhibition in 1915 at the Doré Gallery in London. After this, the movement broke up, largely due to the onset of World War I and public apathy towards their work.

Symbolism

Symbolism was a late 19thcentury art movement of French, Russian, and Belgian origin.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Symbolism's use of artwork as a search for absolute truths

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Symbolism was largely a reaction against naturalism and realism, anti-idealistic styles that were attempts to represent reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal. Symbolism, on the other hand, favored spirituality, the imagination, and dreams.
- Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly. Thus, they wrote and painted in a very metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning.
- Symbolist artists stressed the power of personal subjectivity, emotions and feelings rather than any reliance on realism to suggest larger truths.
- Symbolism expressed scenes from nature, human activities, and all other real world phenomena that are not depicted for their own sake, but rather as perceptible surfaces created to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial ideals.

Key Terms

- **symbolism**: Symbolism was a late 19th century art movement of French, Russian and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts. Symbolism is the practice of representing things by symbols, or of investing things with a symbolic meaning or character. A symbol is an object, action, or idea that represents something other than itself, often of a more abstract nature. Symbolism creates quality aspects that make literature like poetry and novels more meaningful.

A Move Toward Meaning

Symbolism was a late 19th century art movement of French, Russian, and Belgian origin that manifested in poetry and other arts. The term "symbolism" is derived from the word "symbol" which comes from the Latin symbolum, a symbol of faith, and symbolus, a sign of recognition. Symbolism was largely a reaction against naturalism and realism, anti-idealistic styles that were attempts to represent reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal. Symbolism, on the other hand, favored spirituality, the imagination, dreams, emotions, and the personal subjectivity of the artist as a tool to illustrate larger truths. Thematically, Symbolist artists tended to focus on themes surrounding the occult, decadence, melancholy, and death.

The Suicide of Dorothy Hale by Frida Kahlo, 1939: While this painting was a commission, it still demonstrates Kahlo's signature use of symbolism to express her subjective truth.

A Search for Hidden Truth

Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly. Thus, they wrote and painted in a very metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning. Jean Moréas published *The Symbolist Manifesto* ("*Le Symbolisme*") in Le Figaro on 18 September 1886 (see 1886 in poetry). Moréas announced that symbolism was hostile to "plain meanings, declamations, false sentimentality, and matter-of-fact description," and that its goal was to "clothe the Ideal in a perceptible form " whose "goal was not in itself, but whose sole purpose was to express the Ideal." In other words, symbolism expressed scenes from nature, human activities, and all other real world phenomena not for their own sake, but as perceptible surfaces created to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial ideals.

La mort du fossoyeur: La mort du fossoyeur (“The death of the gravedigger”) by Carlos Schwabe is a visual compendium of symbolist motifs. Death and angels, pristine snow, and the dramatic poses of the characters all express symbolist longings for transfiguration “anywhere, out of the world.”

The symbolist style has frequently been confused with decadence and, by the late 1880s, the terms “symbolism” and “decadence” were understood to be almost synonymous. Though the aesthetics of the styles can be considered similar in some ways, the two remain distinct. The symbolists emphasized dreams, ideals, and fantastical subject matter, while the Decadents cultivated *précieux*, ornamented, or hermetic styles, and morbid subject matters. The symbolist painters were an important influence on expressionism and surrealism in painting, two movements that descend directly from symbolism proper.

The harlequins, paupers, and clowns of Pablo Picasso ‘s “Blue Period” show the influence of symbolism, and especially of Puvis de Chavannes. In Belgium, symbolism became so popular that it came to be thought of as a national style: the static strangeness of painters like René Magritte can be considered as a direct continuation of symbolism. The work of some symbolist visual artists, such as Jan Toorop, directly affected the curvilinear forms of art nouveau.

The Caress: Belgian symbolist Fernand Khnopff’s The Caress

Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau was an international style of art and architecture that was most popular from 1890–1910.

Learning Objectives

Describe the origins and characteristics of Art Noveau

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Art Nouveau was an international style of art and architecture that was most popular from 1890–1910. The name "Art Nouveau" is French for "new art." The origins of Art Nouveau are found in the resistance of the artist William Morris to the cluttered compositions and the revival tendencies of the 19th century.
- A reaction to academic art of the 19th century, Art Nouveau was inspired by natural forms and structures, exemplified by curved lines, asymmetry, natural motifs, and intricate embellishment.
- Art Nouveau is considered a "total style," meaning that it pervaded many forms of art and design such as architecture, interior design, the decorative arts, and the visual arts. According to the philosophy of the style, art should strive to be a way of life.

Key Terms

- **Art Nouveau**: Art Nouveau is an international philosophy and style of art, architecture, and applied art—especially the decorative arts—that was most popular during 1890–1910.
- **japonisme**: The influence of Japanese art and culture on European art.
- **syncopated**: A variety of music rhythms that come unexpected.

Background

Art Nouveau is an international style of art and architecture that was most popular from 1890–1910 AD. The name *Art Nouveau* is French for "new art." A reaction to academic art of the 19th century, it was inspired by natural forms and structures, not only in flowers and plants, but also in curved lines. It is also considered a philosophy of furniture design. Art Nouveau furniture is structured according to the whole building and made part of ordinary life. Art Nouveau was most popular in Europe, but its influence was global. It is a very varied style with frequent localized tendencies.

Art Nouveau: Barcelona: The Casa Batlló, already built in 1877, was remodelled in the Barcelona manifestation of Art Nouveau, modernisme, by Antoni Gaudí and Josep Maria Jujol during 1904–1906.

Before the term Art Nouveau became common in France, *le style moderne* ("the modern style") was the more frequent designation. Maison de l'Art Nouveau was the name of the gallery initiated during 1895 by the German art dealer Samuel Bing in Paris that featured exclusively modern art. The fame of his gallery was increased at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, where he presented coordinated installations of modern furniture, tapestries and objets d'art. These decorative displays became so strongly associated with the style, that the name of his gallery subsequently provided a commonly used term for the entire style. Likewise, Jugend (Youth) was the illustrated weekly magazine of art and lifestyle of Munich, founded in 1896 by Georg Hirth. Jugend was instrumental in promoting the Art Nouveau style in Germany. As a result, *Jungenstil*, or Youth Style, became the German word for the style.

Origins of Art Nouveau

The origins of Art Nouveau are found in the resistance of the artist William Morris to the cluttered compositions and revivalist tendencies of the 19th century. His theories helped initiate the Art Nouveau movement. About the same time, the flat perspective and strong colors of Japanese wood block prints, especially those of Katsushika Hokusai, had a strong effect on the formulation of Art Nouveau. The Japonisme that was popular in Europe during the 1880s and 1890s was particularly influential on many artists with its organic forms and references to the natural world.

Although Art Nouveau acquired distinctly localized tendencies as its geographic spread increased, some general characteristics are indicative of the form. A description published in Pan magazine of Hermann Obrist's wall hanging *Cyclamen* (1894), described it

as “sudden violent curves generated by the crack of a whip,” which became well known during the early spread of Art Nouveau. Subsequently, the term “whiplash” is frequently applied to the characteristic curves employed by Art Nouveau artists. Such decorative “whiplash” motifs, formed by dynamic, undulating, and flowing lines in a syncopated rhythm, are found throughout the architecture, painting, sculpture, and other forms of Art Nouveau design.

Art Nouveau as a Total Style

Art Nouveau is now considered a “total style,” meaning that it can be seen in architecture, interior design, decorative arts (including jewelry furniture, textiles, household silver, and other utensils and lighting), and the visual arts. According to the philosophy of the style, art should strive to be a way of life, and thereby encompass all parts. For many Europeans, it was possible to live in an Art Nouveau-inspired house with Art Nouveau furniture, silverware, crockery, jewelry, cigarette cases, etc. Artists thus desired to combine the fine arts and applied arts, even for utilitarian objects.

Desk and Chair by Hector Guimard, 1909–12: The curving, serpentine woodwork seen on this desk is characteristic of Art Nouveau, which often drew stylistic influence from the natural world.

Art Nouveau in architecture and interior design eschewed the eclectic revival styles of the 19th century. Art Nouveau designers selected and “modernized” some of the more abstract elements of Rococo style, such as flame and shell textures. They also advocated the use of very stylized organic forms as a source of inspiration, expanding their natural repertoire to use seaweed, grasses, and insects.

The doorway at place Etienne Pernet, 24 (Paris 15e), 1905 by Alfred Wagon, architect.: The asymmetrical and curvilinear influence of the natural world is again seen in the ironwork of this doorway at Place Etienne Pernet in Paris.

In Art Nouveau painting, two-dimensional pieces were drawn and printed in popular forms such as advertisements, posters, labels, and magazines. Japanese wood-block prints, with their curved lines, patterned surfaces, contrasting voids, and flatness of visual plane, also inspired Art Nouveau painting. Some line and curve patterns became graphic clichés that were later found in works of artists from many parts of the world.

The Peacock Skirt by Aubrey Beardsley, 1893: Aubrey Beardsley is an artist known for his posters and often associated with Art Nouveau due to his use of elaborate decorative pattern and sweeping curvilinear line.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modernism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/4/4c/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/post-and-lintel. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Post-Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism%23Post-Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Post-Impressionist. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Impressionist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Post-Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Post-Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/4/4c/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Georges Seurat - Un dimanche apru00e8s-midi u00e0 l'u00cele de la Grande Jatte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_Seurat_-_Un_dimanche_apr%C3%A8s-midi_%C3%A0_l'%C3%8Ele_de_la_Grande_Jatte.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) - Wheat Field with Crows (1890). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_(1853-1890)_-_Wheat_Field_with_Crows_(1890).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Post-Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Post-Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cezanne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cezanne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cezanne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cezanne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/4/4c/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Georges Seurat - Un dimanche apru00e8s-midi u00e0 l'u00cele de la Grande Jatte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_Seurat_-_Un_dimanche_apr%C3%A8s-midi_%C3%A0_l'%C3%8Ele_de_la_Grande_Jatte.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) - Wheat Field with Crows (1890). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_(1853-1890)_-_Wheat_Field_with_Crows_(1890).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne, Pyramid of Skulls, c. 1901. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne,_Pyramid_of_Skulls,_c._1901.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jas de bouffan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jas_de_bouffan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne 052. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne_052.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Industrial Revolution. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of the United Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_the_United_Kingdom%2320th_century. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vorticism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vorticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art of the United Kingdom. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_of_the_United_Kingdom. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modernism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vorticism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vorticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/4/4c/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Georges Seurat - Un dimanche apru00e8s-midi u00e0 l'u00cele de la Grande Jatte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_Seurat_-_Un_dimanche_apr%C3%A8s-midi_%C3%A0_l'%C3%8Ele_de_la_Grande_Jatte.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) - Wheat Field with Crows (1890). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_(1853-1890)_-_Wheat_Field_with_Crows_(1890).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne, Pyramid of Skulls, c. 1901. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne,_Pyramid_of_Skulls,_c._1901.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jas de bouffan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jas_de_bouffan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Paul Cu00e9zanne 052. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne_052.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Blast2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blast2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Atkinson-TheLake. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Atkinson-TheLake.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Dorothy Hale. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Hale#Frida_Kahlo_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Symbolism (arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism_(arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- symbolism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/symbolism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/4/4c/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Georges Seurat - Un dimanche apru00e8s-midi u00e0 l'u00cele de la Grande Jatte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_Seurat_-_Un_dimanche_apr%C3%A8s-midi_%C3%A0_l'%C3%8Ele_de_la_Grande_Jatte.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) - Wheat Field with Crows (1890). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_(1853-1890)_-_Wheat_Field_with_Crows_(1890).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne, Pyramid of Skulls, c. 1901. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne,_Pyramid_of_Skulls,_c._1901.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jas de bouffan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jas_de_bouffan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne 052. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne_052.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Blast2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blast2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Atkinson-TheLake. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Atkinson-TheLake.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Suicide_of_Dorothy_Hale.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frida_Kahlo#/media/File:Suicide_of_Dorothy_Hale.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Death of the Grave Digger. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Death_of_the_Grave_Digger.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Fernand Khnopff 002. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fernand_Khnopff_002.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Casa Batllu00f3. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Casa_Batll%C3%B3. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art Nouveau. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Nouveau. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- japonisme. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/japonisme. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art Nouveau. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art%20Nouveau. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- syncopated. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/syncopated. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/4/4c/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Georges Seurat - Un dimanche apru00e8s-midi u00e0 l'u00cele de la Grande Jatte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georges_Seurat_-_Un_dimanche_apr%C3%A8s-midi_%C3%A0_l'%C3%8Ele_de_la_Grande_Jatte.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) - Wheat Field with Crows (1890). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_(1853-1890)_-_Wheat_Field_with_Crows_(1890).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne, Pyramid of Skulls, c. 1901. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne,_Pyramid_of_Skulls,_c._1901.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jas de bouffan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jas_de_bouffan.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paul Cu00e9zanne 052. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_C%C3%A9zanne_052.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Blast2. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blast2.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Atkinson-TheLake. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Atkinson-TheLake.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Suicide_of_Dorothy_Hale.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frida_Kahlo#/media/File:Suicide_of_Dorothy_Hale.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- The Death of the Grave Digger. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Death_of_the_Grave_Digger.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Fernand Khnopff 002. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fernand_Khnopff_002.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Beardsley-peacockskirt.png. **Provided by**: Wikimedia Commons. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Beardsley-peacockskirt.PNG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hector_Guimard_Museu0301e_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Lyon_5469543414.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/3/3b/Hector_Guimard_%28Mus%C3%A9e_des_Beaux-Arts_de_Lyon%29_%285469543414%29.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- CasaBatllo 0170. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CasaBatllo_0170.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Immeuble rue de l'u00e9glise du00e9tail Porte. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Immeuble_rue_de_l'%C3%A9glise_d%C3%A9tail_Porte.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 28.10: The Rise of Modernism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.11: The Beginning of Modern Architecture

Changes in Technology

Building materials spawned by the Industrial Revolution, such as iron, steel, and sheet glass, determined new architectural techniques.

Learning Objectives

Name some of the common themes of modern architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Among the common themes of modern architecture was the use of industrially produced materials.
- In the 1830s Britisher Eaton Hodgkinson introduced the section beam, leading to widespread use of iron construction.
- The Crystal Palace by Joseph Paxton, which housed the Great Exhibition of 1851, was an early example of iron and glass construction.
- Around 1900 a number of architects and designers around the world began developing new solutions to integrate traditional precedents (classicism or Gothic, for instance) with new technological possibilities.

Key Terms

- **Industrial Revolution**: The major technological, socioeconomic, and cultural change in the late 18th and early 19th century when the economy shifted from one based on manual labor to one dominated by machine manufacture.
- **William Le Baron Jenney**: (1832–1907) An American architect and engineer who is known for building the first skyscraper in 1884 and became known as the Father of the American skyscraper.
- **Crystal Palace**: A cast-iron and plate-glass building erected in Hyde Park, London, England, to house the Great Exhibition of 1851. More than 14,000 exhibitors from around the world gathered in the Palace's 990,000 square feet (92,000 m2) of exhibition space to display examples of the latest technology developed in the Industrial Revolution. Designed by Joseph Paxton, the Great Exhibition building was 1,851 feet (564 m) long, with an interior height of 128 feet (39 m).

Modern Themes

Common themes of modern architecture include:

- The notion that " form follows function," a dictum originally expressed by Frank Lloyd Wright's early mentor Louis Sullivan, meaning that the result of design should derive directly from its purpose
- Simplicity and clarity of forms and elimination of "unnecessary detail"
- Visual expression of structure (as opposed to the hiding of structural elements)
- The related concept of "truth to materials," meaning that the true nature or natural appearance of a material ought to be seen rather than concealed or altered to represent something else
- Use of industrially produced materials
- Adoption of the machine aesthetic, particularly in International Style modernism
- A visual emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines

Application of Themes

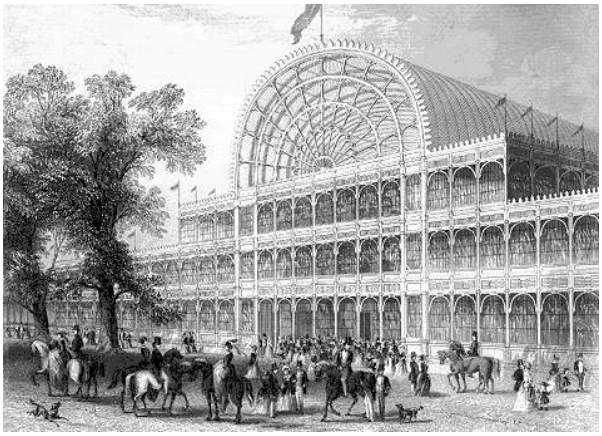
With the Industrial Revolution, the increasing availability of new building materials such as iron, steel, and sheet glass drove the invention of equally new building techniques. In 1796, Shrewsbury mill owner Charles Bage first used his "fireproof" design, which relied on cast iron and brick with flagstone floors. Such construction greatly strengthened the structure of mills, which enabled them to accommodate much bigger machines. Due to poor knowledge of iron's properties as a construction material, a number of early mills collapsed. It was not until the early 1830s that Eaton Hodgkinson introduced the section beam, leading to widespread use of iron construction.

This kind of austere industrial architecture utterly transformed the landscape of northern Britain, leading the poet William Blake to describe places like Manchester and parts of West Yorkshire as “Dark satanic mills.” The Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition of 1851, was an early example of iron and glass construction. It was followed in 1864 by the first glass and metal curtain wall. A further development was that of the steel-framed skyscraper in Chicago, introduced around 1890 by William Le Baron Jenney and Louis Sullivan.

Modernist Schools

Around 1900, a number of architects and designers around the world began developing new solutions to integrate traditional precedents (classicism or Gothic, for instance) with new technological possibilities. The work of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago, Victor Horta in Brussels, Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona, Otto Wagner and the Vienna Secession in Austria, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Glasgow, among many others, can be seen as a common struggle between old and new. The work of some of these were a part of what is broadly categorized as *Art Nouveau* (“new art”).

Note that the Russian word for Art Nouveau, *Stil Modern*, and the Spanish word for Art Nouveau, *Modernismo*, are cognates of the English word “Modern,” though they carry different meanings. An early use of the term in print around this time that approached its later meaning can be found in the title of a book by Otto Wagner. The aftermath of the First World War would result in additional experimentation and ideas. Following the experiments in Art Nouveau and its related movements around the world, modernism in architecture and design grew out of stylistic threads originating throughout the world.



The transept façade of the Crystal Palace: The Crystal Palace, 1851, was one of the first buildings to have vast amounts of glass supported by structural metal, foreshadowing trends in Modernist architecture.

Modern Architecture: Form Follows Function

Modern architecture adhered to Louis Sullivan’s famous precept, “form follows function,” which called for an absence of ornamentation beyond functional necessity.

Learning Objectives

Explain Louis Sullivan’s adage, “form follows function,” and its influence on modern architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- “Function” came to be seen as encompassing all criteria of the use, perception, and enjoyment of a building, not only the practical aspects but also aesthetic, psychological, and cultural.
- Modern architecture is generally characterized by simplification of form and by the creation of ornament from the structure and theme of the building.
- In the early stages of Modern architecture, “decoration is a crime” was a popular motto.

Key Terms

- **Louis Sullivan**: (1856–1924) An American architect who has been called the “father of skyscrapers” and “father of modernism.” He is considered by many to be the creator of the modern skyscraper, was an influential architect, critic of the Chicago School, and a mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright.
- **Bauhaus School**: A school in Germany that combined crafts and the fine arts, and was famous for the approach to design that it publicized and taught. It operated from 1919 to 1933.
- **Deutscher Werkbund**: A German association of artists, architects, designers, and industrialists. The Werkbund was to become an important event in the development of modern architecture and industrial design, particularly in the later creation of the Bauhaus School of design.

A Revolution in Scale and Form

The great 19th century architect of skyscrapers, Louis Sullivan, promoted an overriding precept to architectural design: “Form follows function.” While the notion that structural and aesthetic considerations should be entirely subject to functionality was met with both approval and skepticism, it had the effect of introducing the concept of “function” in place of “utility.” “Function” came to be seen as encompassing all criteria of the use, perception, and enjoyment of a building, not only practical but also aesthetic, psychological, and cultural.

Modern architecture is generally characterized by simplification of form and by the creation of ornament from the structure and theme of the building. It is a term applied to an overarching movement, with its exact definition and scope varying widely. In a broader sense, early modern architecture began at the turn of the 20th century with efforts to reconcile the principles underlying architectural design with rapid technological advancement and the modernization of society. It would take the form of numerous movements, schools of design, and architectural styles, some in tension to one another, and often equally defying classification.

The Industrial Revolution introduced and popularized the use of steel, plate glass, as well as mass-produced components in architecture. These new materials opened up a new world for bold structural frames, with clean lines and plain or shiny surfaces. In the early stages of modern architecture, a popular motto was “decoration is a crime.” In Eastern Europe, the Communists rejected the West’s decadent ways, and modernism developed in a markedly more bureaucratic, somber, and monumental fashion.

Some historians regard Modernism as a matter of taste, a reaction against eclecticism and the lavish stylistic excesses of Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Around the turn of the 20th century, a general dissatisfaction with the emphasis on revivalist architecture and elaborate decoration gave rise to many new lines of thought that served as precursors to Modern Architecture. Notable among these are the philosophies of the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus School.

The AEG Turbinenfabrik (“turbine factory”), 1909, designed by Peter Behrens, illustrating the combination of industry and design.: Behrens’s turbine factory reflects the absence of decorative elements typical of modern architecture.

The approach of the Modernist architects was to reduce buildings to pure forms, removing historical references and ornament in favor of functionalist details. Buildings displayed their functional and structural elements, exposing steel beams and concrete surfaces instead of hiding them behind decorative forms.

Chicago School of Architecture

The Chicago School of architecture is famous for promoting steel-frame construction and a modernist spatial aesthetic.

Learning Objectives

Indicate the major features of the Chicago School of architecture, as well as some of the names most closely associated with it

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While the term " Chicago School " is widely used to describe buildings in the city during the 1880s and 1890s, Chicago buildings of the era displayed a wide variety of styles and techniques.
- One of the distinguishing features of the Chicago School is the use of steel-frame buildings with masonry cladding (usually terra cotta), allowing large plate-glass window areas and limiting the amount of exterior ornamentation.
- The "Chicago window" originated in this school. It is a three-part window consisting of a large fixed center panel flanked by two smaller double-hung sash windows.

Key Terms

- **Chicago School**: A school of architects active in Chicago at the turn of the 20th century. They were among the first to promote the new technologies of steel-frame construction in commercial buildings, and developed a spatial aesthetic that co-evolved with, and then came to influence, parallel developments in European Modernism.
- **"Chicago window"**: A three-part window consisting of a large fixed center panel flanked by two smaller double-hung sash windows.
- **modernism**: The modernist movement in the arts, its set of cultural tendencies and associated cultural movements, originally arising from wide-scale and far-reaching changes to Western society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In particular, the development of modern industrial societies and the rapid growth of cities, followed then by the horror of World War I, were among the factors that shaped Modernism.

Chicago's architecture is famous throughout the world and one style is referred to as the Chicago School. It is also known as Commercial style. In the history of architecture, the Chicago School was a school of architects active in Chicago at the turn of the 20th century. They were among the first to promote the new technologies of steel-frame construction in commercial buildings, and developed a spatial aesthetic that co-evolved with, and then came to influence, parallel developments in European Modernism.

While the term Chicago School is widely used to describe buildings in the city during the 1880s and 1890s, this term has been disputed by scholars, in particular in reaction to Carl Condit's 1952 book *The Chicago School of Architecture*. Historians such as H. Allen Brooks, Winston Weisman, and Daniel Bluestone have pointed out that the phrase suggests a unified set of aesthetic or conceptual precepts, when, in fact, Chicago buildings of the era displayed a wide variety of styles and techniques. Contemporary publications used the phrase Commercial style to describe the innovative tall buildings of the era rather than proposing any sort of unified school.

One of the distinguishing features of the Chicago School is the use of steel-frame buildings with masonry cladding (usually terra cotta), allowing large plate-glass window areas and limiting the amount of exterior ornamentation. Sometimes elements of neoclassical architecture are used in Chicago School skyscrapers. Many Chicago School skyscrapers contain the three parts of a classical column. The first floor functions as the base, the middle stories, usually with little ornamental detail, act as the shaft of the column, and the last floor or so represent the capital, with more ornamental detail and capped with a cornice.

The Chicago Building by Holabird & Roche (1904–1905): This steel frame building displays both variations of the Chicago window; its facade is dominated by the window area (limiting decorative embellishments) and it is capped with a cornice, elements that are all typical of the Chicago School.

The “Chicago window” originated in this school. It is a three-part window consisting of a large fixed center panel flanked by two smaller double-hung sash windows. The arrangement of windows on the facade typically creates a grid pattern, with some projecting out from the facade forming bay windows. The Chicago window combined the functions of light-gathering and natural ventilation; a single central pane was usually fixed, while the two surrounding panes were operable. These windows were often deployed in bays, known as oriel windows, that projected out over the street.

Chicago School window grid: The Chicago window combined the functions of light-gathering and natural ventilation; a single central pane was usually fixed, while the two surrounding panes were operable.

Architects whose names are associated with the Chicago School include Henry Hobson Richardson, Dankmar Adler, Daniel Burnham, William Holabird, William LeBaron Jenney, Martin Roche, John Root, Solon S. Beman, and Louis Sullivan. Frank Lloyd Wright started in the firm of Adler and Sullivan but created his own Prairie Style of architecture.

The Home Insurance Building in Chicago, Ilinois: Some regarded the Home Insurance Building, designed by architect William Le Baron Jenney, as the first skyscraper in the world. It was built in Chicago in 1884 and was demolished in 1931.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Industrial Revolution. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modern architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- William Le Baron Jenney. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/William%20Le%20Baron%20Jenney. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crystal Palace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Crystal%20Palace. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crystal Palace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Crystal_Palace.PNG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Modern architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Architectural style. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Architectural_style. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Deutscher Werkbund. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutscher%20Werkbund. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Louis Sullivan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis%20Sullivan. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bauhaus School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bauhaus%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crystal Palace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Crystal_Palace.PNG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Berlin AEG Turbinenfabrik. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin_AEG_Turbinenfabrik.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chicago school (architecture). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_school_(architecture). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chicago School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chicago window. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago%20window. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- modernism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/modernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Crystal Palace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Crystal_Palace.PNG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Berlin AEG Turbinenfabrik. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin_AEG_Turbinenfabrik.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 2006-03-30 2240x1680 chicago school windows. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2006-03-30_2240x1680_chicago_school_windows.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- 2010-03-03_1856x2784_chicago_chicago_building.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/a/a3/2010-03-03_1856x2784_chicago_chicago_building.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Home Insurance Building. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Home_Insurance_Building.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.11: The Beginning of Modern Architecture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

28.12: Photography

Development of Photography

Camera photography was invented in the first decades of the 19th century.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline of the development of photography throughout the 19th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- A photograph is created when light falls on a light-sensitive surface.
- Before the first camera was ever invented, Chinese and Greek philosophers described the ” pinhole camera.”
- Nicephore Niepce was a French inventor known for producing the first permanent photoetching in 1822.
- Daguerre invented the Daguerrotype in 1837.
- Many chemical and physical photographic advances were made throughout the mid-19th century including the invention of the cyanotype, ambrotype, tintype, and negative on albumen.
- Photography represents the first instance of an artistic medium being used widely by the masses as a mode of visual expression.
- The American Civil War (1861–65) was the first war in American history to be photographically documented.
- Photographs in the first half of the 19th century were very expensive to produce. In the 1860s, a series of cheaper photographic technologies allowed for the middle class to take part in commissioning and purchasing photographs.

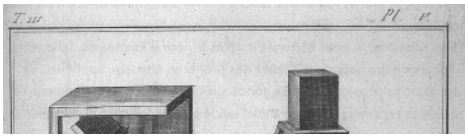
Key Terms

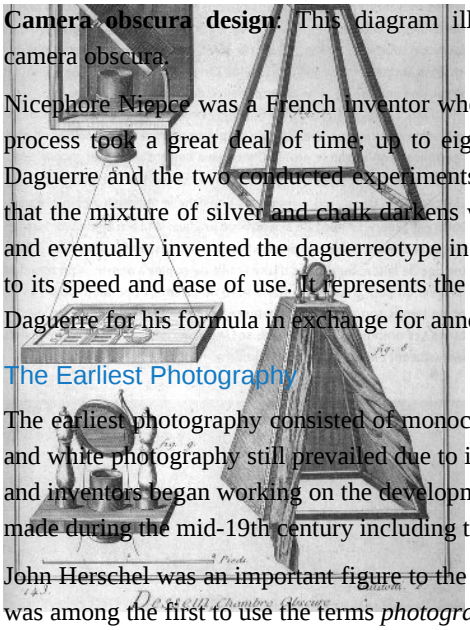
- **calotype**: An early photographic process introduced in 1841 by William Henry Fox Talbot that used paper coated with silver iodide; also known as a talbotype
- **photoetching**: A photolithographic etching process. It uses light to transfer a geometric pattern from a photomask to a light-sensitive chemical on the substrate.
- **cyanotype**: An early photographic process employing paper sensitized with a cyanide.
- **ambrotype**: An early type of photograph in which a glass negative appears positive when displayed on a black background.
- **camera obscura**: A darkened chamber in which the image of an outside object is projected and focused onto a surface.
- **tintype**: A mid-19th century photographic technology that created a direct positive image onto a thin piece of tin.
- **daguerreotype**: An early type of photograph created by exposing a silver-coated copper surface previously exposed to either iodine vapor or iodine and bromine vapors.

Background

The word “photograph” is based on the Greek *phos* meaning light and *graphe* meaning drawing, together meaning drawing with light. Essentially, a photograph is created when a light-sensitive surface is exposed to light, leaving a mark on said surface. Camera photography was invented in the first decades of the 19th century, and even at this early point, it was able to capture more information, and with greater speed, than painting or sculpture.

There are a number of important precursors to photography. In the 5th century BCE, before the first camera was ever invented, Chinese and Greek philosophers described the “pinhole camera,” a lightproof box with a tiny hole in one side that allowed light to pass through and project an inverted image one side. The *camera obscura* is a version of the pinhole camera, and was often used as a tool by artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci as a technique to create paintings. The process of photography was effectually engaged in creating a permanent image from the process outlined originally by the camera obscura.





Camera obscura design: This diagram illustrates the components of a camera obscura.

Nicephore Niepce was a French inventor who is known to have produced the first permanent photoetching in 1822. However, his process took a great deal of time; up to eight hours were needed to expose a single image. Niepce began to work with Louis Daguerre and the two conducted experiments with silver compounds, based on a theory of Johann Heinrich Schultz, who proved that the mixture of silver and chalk darkens when it is exposed to light. Niepce died in 1833 but Daguerre continued on this path and eventually invented the daguerreotype in 1837. The daguerreotype was an incredibly important discovery for photography due to its speed and ease of use. It represents the first commercially successful photographic process. Eventually, France agreed to pay Daguerre for his formula in exchange for announcing his discovery as the gift of France, which he did in 1839.

The Earliest Photography

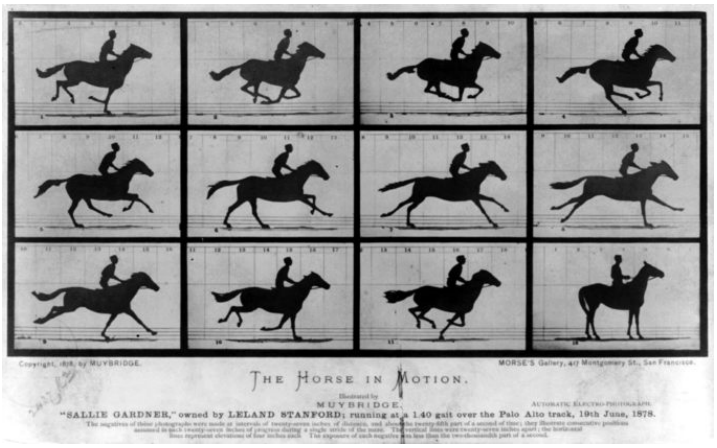
The earliest photography consisted of monochromatic or black and white shots. Even after color photography was invented, black and white photography still prevailed due to its lower cost and preferable appearance. During the mid-19th century, many scientists and inventors began working on the development of photography. A number of chemical and physical photographic variations were made during the mid-19th century including the invention of the cyanotype, ambrotype, tintype, and negative on albumen.

John Herschel was an important figure to the development of photography. He is credited with creating the first glass negative, and was among the first to use the terms *photography*, *negative*, and *positive*. In addition, he discovered a solution that could be used to "fix" photographs in order to make them more permanent. William Fox Talbot worked to refine Daguerre's process in order to make the new photographic medium more available to the masses. He also invented the calotype process, which produces a paper print from a negative image. Talbot's photograph of the Oriel window in Lacock Abbey is the oldest negative in existence.

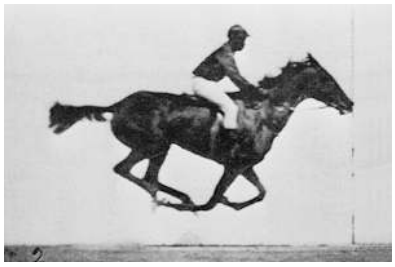
The 1860s were a defining decade for photography. In addition to the American Civil War (1861–65), the first war in American history to be documented with photographs, the 1860s also brought photography to the middle class. While the first half of the century introduced expensive daguerreotypes, the latter half of the century is defined by the development of cheaper photographic techniques. For example, the ambrotype mimicked the look of the daguerreotype with its reflective surface; however, the newer technology used a light-sensitized glass surface instead of copper, which made for a much cheaper photograph to produce and purchase. Likewise, the tintype eclipsed the ambrotype later in the decade by replacing glass with tin, an even cheaper material, and one that dried much quicker than glass. However, it was the albumen print, paper positives that retained the image quality of metal surfaces, that proved to be the winning technology, lasting well into the 20th century.

Albumen print by Alexander Gardner, 1862: This print by Alexander Gardner depicts bodies of Confederate artillerymen near Dunker church.

Since the earliest photographic developments, many scientists and artists have taken great interest in photography's inherent abilities. Artists have used photography to study movement and motion, details that before this point could not be seen by the naked eye, as we see in Eadweard Muybridge's studies from 1887. Photography represents the first instance of an artistic medium being used widely by the masses as a mode of visual expression.



The Horse in Motion, 1886, Eadweard Muybridge: *The Horse in Motion* by Eadweard Muybridge illustrates the artist's preoccupation with documenting motion and his use of photography as a sequential art form.



Flying Gallop Hypothesis Falsified: Galloping horse, animated in 2006 using photos by Eadweard Muybridge.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Louis Daguerre. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Daguerre. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Photolithography. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Photolithography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Edward Steichen. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Steichen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Alfred Stieglitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Stieglitz. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Photography. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Daguerreotype. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/daguerreotype. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cyanotype. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cyanotype. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/calotype. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Photoetching. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/photoetching. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ambrotype. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ambrotype. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tintype. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tintype. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Camera obscura. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/camera_obscura. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bodies of Confederate artillerymen near Dunker church. Photograph by Alexander Gardner, 1862. **Provided by**: Library of Congress. **Located at**: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.32887/. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Scientific method. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_method. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Eadweard Muybridge. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eadweard_Muybridge. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Camera obscura. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_obscura. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 28.12: Photography is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

29: Europe and America from 1900-1950 CE

29.1: European Art in the Early 20th Century
29.2: Europe from 1920-1945 CE
29.3: Modernism in America
29.4: Art in the US during the 1920s and 1930s
29.5: Modern Architecture
29.6: Canadian Painting
29.7: The Mexican Renaissance
29.8: Art in Brazil
29.9: Cuban Art
29.10: Abstract Expressionism

This page titled 29: Europe and America from 1900-1950 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.1: European Art in the Early 20th Century

The Early 20th Century

The early 20th century was marked by rapid industrial, economic, social, and cultural change, which influenced the worldview of many and set the stage for new artistic movements.

Learning Objectives

Identify how industrial, economic, social, and cultural change set the stage for the art movements of the early 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The first two decades of the 20th century were marked by enormous industrial, economic, social, and cultural developments.
- International trade brought with it increasing growth and prosperity, along with a rise in poverty and slums in major cities. Urbanization, advances in science and technology, and the spread of goods and information were markers of the times.
- With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, art became heavily influenced by the desire to abstract life and escape the horrific possibilities of the human condition. Artists began to question and play around with themes of reality, perspective, space, and time.

Key Terms

- **urbanization**: The change in a country or region when its population migrates from rural to urban areas.

The first two decades of the 20th century were marked by enormous industrial, economic, social and cultural change. International trade brought with it increasing growth and prosperity, along with a rise in poverty and slums in major cities. Urbanization, architectural advances, increases in technology, and the spread of goods and information were markers of the times. Competition between nations was reflected in attempts to show off advances in technology, business, and architecture, among other things. Prominent scientific advancements of the time included Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Freud's development of modern psychology.

After the relative peace of most of the 19th century, rivalry between European powers erupted in 1914 with the outbreak of the first World War. Over 60 million European soldiers were mobilized from 1914–1918 as countries around the world were called into the conflict. With the widespread death and destruction of the greatest war the world had ever seen, art increasingly became a means for escapism, a way to abstract life and escape the difficulties of the human condition.

A ration party of the Royal Irish Rifles in a communication trench during the Battle of the Somme, July 1916: The death and destruction of World War I contributed to the desire of artists to abstract life.

The economic and social changes of the early 20th century greatly influenced the North American and European worldview which, in turn, shaped the development of new styles of art. Artists began to question and experiment with themes of reality, perspective, space and time, and representation. Einstein's Theory of Relativity contributed to the development of cubism, and developments in psychology greatly influenced the subject matter of a number of artistic schools of thought. The rapid rise of technology impacted artists both directly and indirectly, from the invention of new artistic materials to subject matter and themes.

Fauvism

The Fauves were a group of early 20th century Modern artists based in Paris whose works challenged Impressionist values.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the characteristics of Fauvism, as found in the work of Matisse and Derain, from those of its predecessor Impressionism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Fauvist movement, led by Henri Matisse and Andre Derain, officially lasted for only four years: 1904–1908.
- Vivid color, simplification, abstraction, and unusual brush strokes are hallmarks of the Fauvist style. Fauvist influences and references include Van Gogh's Post- Impressionism and the Neo-Impressionist technique of Pointillism.
- Gustave Moreau, a controversial professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, mentored several of the Fauves, including Matisse, and profoundly influenced their work.

Key Terms

- **Post-Impressionism**: (Art) a genre of painting that rejected the naturalism of impressionism, using color and form in more expressive manners.
- **pointillism**: In art, the use of small areas of color to construct an image.
- **Fauvism**: An artistic movement of the last part of the 19th century that emphasized spontaneity and the use of extremely bright colors.

Fauvism is the style of *les Fauves* (French for "the wild beasts"), a short-lived and loose group of early 20th century Modern artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong color over the representational or realistic values retained by Impressionism. While Fauvism as a style began around 1900 and continued beyond 1910, the movement as such lasted only a few years, 1904–1908, and had three exhibitions. The leaders of the movement were Henri Matisse and André Derain.

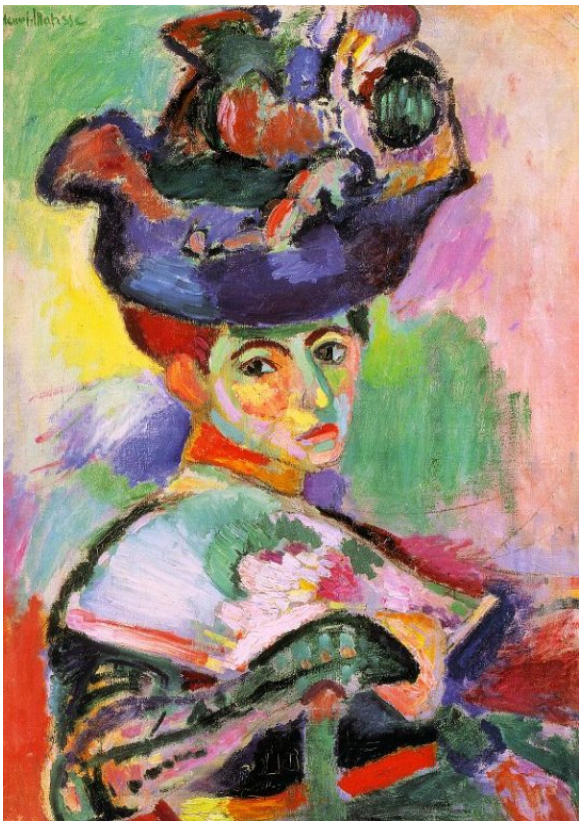
Charing Cross Bridge, London by André Derain, 1906: The vibrant, surprising use of color in this work is characteristic of the Fauvist style.

Apart from Matisse and Derain, other artists included Albert Marquet, Charles Camoin, Louis Valtat, the Belgian painter Henri Evenepoel, Maurice Marinot, Jean Puy, Maurice de Vlaminck, Henri Manguin, Raoul Dufy, Othon Friesz, Georges Rouault, the Dutch painter Kees van Dongen, the Swiss painter Alice Bailly, and Georges Braque (subsequently Picasso's partner in Cubism).

The paintings of the Fauves were characterized by seemingly wild brush work and strident colors, while their subject matter had a high degree of simplification and abstraction. Fauvism can be classified as an extreme development of Van Gogh's Post-Impressionism fused with the pointillism of Seurat and other Neo-Impressionist painters, in particular Paul Signac. Other key influences were Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin, whose employment of areas of saturated color—notably in paintings from Tahiti—strongly influenced Derain's work.

Gustave Moreau, a controversial professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and a Symbolist painter, was the movement's inspirational teacher. Moreau taught Matisse, Marquet, Manguin, Rouault, and Camoin during the 1890s, and was viewed by critics as the group's philosophical leader until Matisse was recognized as such in 1904. Moreau's broad-mindedness, originality, and affirmation of the expressive potency of pure color was inspirational for his students.

Derain and Matisse worked together through the summer of 1905 in the Mediterranean village of Collioure, and later that year displayed their highly innovative paintings at the Salon d'Automne. The vivid, unnatural colors led the critic Louis Vauxcelles to derisively dub their works as *les Fauves*, or "the wild beasts," which the artists then appropriated as the title for their movement. The painting that was singled out for special condemnation, Matisse's *Woman with a Hat*, was subsequently bought by the major patrons of the avant-garde scene in Paris, Gertrude and Leo Stein.



Woman with a Hat by Henri Matisse, 1905.: This painting was rejected by critics when initially exhibited, but was soon acquired by avant-garde collectors Leo and Gertrude Stein.

Primitivism and Cubism

As one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso is widely known for his involvement in Cubism and Primitivism.

Learning Objectives

Identify Picasso's unique importance to the development of both Primitivism and Cubism in the early 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- 1906–1909 is referred to as Picasso's African period, during which he produced *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and several other paintings incorporating primitivist elements.
- Picasso was inspired by African artifacts as well as the work of Post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin.
- The formal elements of *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* bridged Picasso's African Period and subsequent Cubist work.
- Picasso and Georges Braque co-founded the Cubist movement, one of the most influential movements in Modern Art.
- Cubism stressed basic abstract geometric forms that presented the subject from many angles simultaneously.

Key Terms

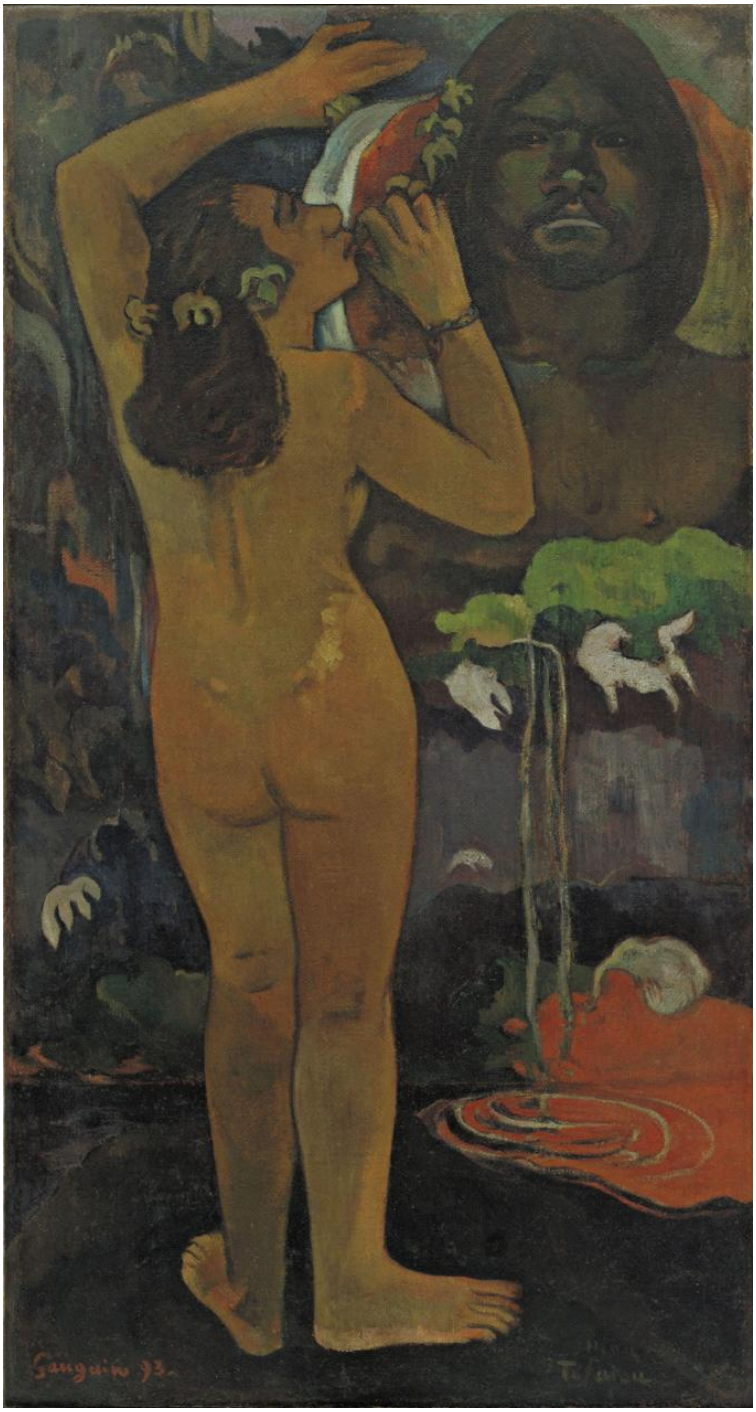
- **primitivism**: Primitivism is a Western art movement that borrows visual forms from non-Western or prehistoric peoples, a practice that was central to the development of modern art.

African Period and Primitivism (1906–1910)

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the European cultural elite were discovering African, Micronesian, and Native American art. African artifacts were being brought back to Paris museums following the expansion of the French empire into

Africa. The press was abuzz with exaggerated stories of cannibalism and exotic tales about the African kingdom of Dahomey. The mistreatment of Africans in the Belgian Congo was exposed in Joseph Conrad's popular book, *Heart of Darkness*.

Artists such as Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, and Picasso were intrigued and inspired by the stark power and simplicity of styles of "primitive" cultures. Around 1906, Picasso, Matisse, Derain, and other Paris-based artists had acquired an interest in Primitivism, Iberian sculpture, African art, and tribal masks, in part due to the works of Paul Gauguin that had recently achieved recognition in Paris's avant-garde circles. Gauguin's powerful posthumous retrospective exhibitions at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in 1903 and 1906 had a powerful influence on Picasso's paintings.



The Moon and the Earth by Paul Gauguin, 1893: Picasso was greatly influenced by Gauguin's African inspired works like *The Moon and The Earth*.

In 1907, Picasso experienced a “revelation” while viewing African art at the ethnographic museum at Palais du Trocadéro. African art influenced Picasso’s painting *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907), especially in its treatment of the two figures on the right side of the composition. This painting is also considered a protocubist work bridging Picasso’s African and Cubist periods. Other works of Picasso’s African Period include *Bust of a Woman* (1907, in the National Gallery, Prague); *Mother and Child* (Summer 1907, in the Musée Picasso, Paris); *Nude with Raised Arms* (1907, in the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain); and *Three Women* (Summer 1908, in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg).

Les Desmoiselles d’Avignon by Pablo Picasso, 1907: This work is influenced by primitivism and is considered to be one of the earliest examples of Cubist painting.

Cubism (1909–1912)

Cubism, established by Picasso and his colleague Georges Bracque, was marked by a revolutionary departure from representational art. In Cubist artwork, objects were analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstracted form instead of being depicted from one viewpoint. Picasso, Braque, and other Cubists depicted subjects from a multitude of viewpoints to create a greater scope of context. Cubism has been considered the most influential art movement of the 20th century.

***Violin and Candlestick* by Georges Braque, 1910**: Georges Braque, with Picasso, was one of the founders of Cubism.

Cubism had a global reach as a movement, influencing similar schools of thought in literature, music, and architecture. Particular offshoots beyond France included the movements of Futurism, Suprematism, Dada, Constructivism, and De Stijl, which all developed in response to Cubism. Early Futurist paintings have some commonalities with Cubism: the fusing of the past and the present and the representation of different views of the subject pictured at the same time, also called multiple perspective, simultaneity or multiplicity. Constructivism was influenced by Picasso's technique of constructing sculpture from separate elements. Other common threads between these disparate movements include the faceting or simplification of geometric forms, and the association of mechanization and modern life.

Cubist Sculpture

Just as in painting, Cubist sculpture is rooted in Paul Cézanne's reduction of painted objects into component planes and geometric solids (cubes, spheres, cylinders, and cones). And just as in painting, it became a pervasive influence and contributed fundamentally to Constructivism and Futurism.

Cubist sculpture developed in parallel to Cubist painting. During the autumn of 1909 Picasso sculpted *Head of a Woman (Fernande)* with positive features depicted by negative space and vice versa. Marcel Duchamp was responsible for another extreme development inspired by Cubism. The ready-made arose from a joint consideration that the work itself is considered an object (just as a painting), and that it uses the material detritus of the world (as collage and paper mache in the Cubist construction and Assemblage). The next logical step, for Duchamp, was to present an ordinary object as a self-sufficient work of art representing only itself. In 1913 he attached a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool and in 1914 selected a bottle-drying rack as a sculpture in its own right.

Other Forms of Cubism

Futurism and Constructivism developed from Cubism in Italy and Russia respectively.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate the artistic styles of Futurism and Constructivism from their Cubist origins

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Cubist work represents an artistic subject from multiple perspectives simultaneously.
- Italian Futurism and Russian Constructivism are two movements that were greatly influenced by Cubism.
- Divisionism, a technique in which color and light are deconstructed, is an important aspect of Futurist and Cubist work.
- Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, Pierre Reverdy, and William Faulkner all applied Cubist principles to written work.
- Cubist poets and writers also influenced Dada and Surrealism.

Key Terms

- **futurism**: An early 20th century avant-garde art movement focused on speed, the mechanical, and the modern, which took a deeply antagonistic attitude to traditional artistic conventions; (originated by F.T. Marinetti, among others).
- **divisionism**: In art, the use of small areas of color to construct an image.
- **constructivism**: A Russian movement in modern art characterized by the creation of nonrepresentational geometric objects using industrial materials.

Cubism

Cubism was an avant-garde art movement of the early 20th century pioneered by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, and later joined by Juan Gris, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Robert Delaunay, Henri Le Fauconnier, and Fernand Léger. The movement revolutionized European painting and sculpture and inspired related movements in music, literature, and architecture. Cubism has been considered the most influential art movement of the 20th century.

***Violin and Candlestick* by Georges Braque, 1910**: Georges Braque, with Picasso, was one of the founders of Cubism.

In Cubist artwork, objects are analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstracted form. Instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.

Constructivism

Constructivism was an artistic and architectural philosophy that originated in Russia in 1919. It entailed a rejection of the idea of autonomous art and was in favor of art as a practice for social purposes. Constructivism had a great impact on modern art movements of the 20th century, influencing major trends such as Bauhaus and the De Stijl movement. It is difficult to isolate a particular aesthetic common to the Constructivist philosophy as it is so broad, but it can be roughly distinguished by its use of bright, bold color and geometric designs, especially in graphic design.

The First Working Group of Constructivists (including Liubov Popova, Alexander Vesnin, Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, and the theorists Aleksei Gan, Boris Arvatov, and Osip Brik) developed a definition of Constructivism as the combination of *faktura*: the particular material properties of an object, and *tektonika*, its spatial presence. Initially the Constructivists worked on three-dimensional constructions as a means of participating in industry. Later the definition would be extended to designs for two-dimensional works such as books and posters.

Proun Vrashchenia by El Lissitzky c. 1919: The geometric forms and bright colors in this painting are characteristic of the Constructivist aesthetic.

Futurism

Futurism was an Italian movement that emphasized and glorified themes associated with contemporary concepts of the future such as speed, technology, youth, and violence, as well as objects such as the car, the airplane, and the industrial city. In 1910 and 1911 futurist painters made use of the technique of divisionism, which entails breaking light and color down into a field of stippled dots and stripes. Severini was the first to come into contact with Cubism. Following a visit to Paris in 1911, the Futurist painters adopted the methods of the Cubists. Cubism offered them a means of analyzing energy in paintings and visually expressing their desired focus on dynamism, motion, and speed. The adoption of Cubism determined the style of much subsequent Futurist painting.

Abstract Speed + Sound, by Giacomo Balla 1913–1914: This is a seminal work from the Futurist movement which was influenced by Cubism.

German Expressionism

German Expressionism refers to a number of related creative movements beginning before WWI and peaking in Berlin during the 1920s.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the importance of the group Die Brücke and artists such as Kirchner, Kollwitze, Schiele, and Modersohn-Becker in the development of German Expressionism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Kathe Kollwitz, Egon Schiele, and Paula Modersohn-Becker are among the independent German Expressionists who were unaffiliated with other Expressionist groups but nonetheless successful.
- Kollwitz is best remembered for her compassionate series, The Weavers.
- Many of Egon Schiele's contemporaries found the explicit sexual themes of his work disturbing.
- Paula Modersohn-Becker is among the first recognized female artists to create nude self-portraits.

Key Terms

- **Weimar Republic**: The democratic regime of Germany from 1919 to the assumption of power by Adolf Hitler in 1933.
- **expressionism**: A movement in the arts in which the artist does not depict objective reality, but rather a subjective expression of inner experience.
- **Fauvism**: An artistic movement of the last part of the 19th century that emphasized spontaneity and the use of extremely bright colors.

Expressionism

Expressionism was a modernist movement, beginning with poetry and painting, that originated in Germany at the start of the 20th century. It emphasized subjective experience, manipulating perspective for emotional effect in order to evoke moods or ideas. Expressionist artists sought to express meaning or emotional experience rather than physical reality.

Expressionism was developed as an avant-garde style before the First World War and remained popular during the Weimar Republic, particularly in Berlin. The style extended to a wide range of the arts, including painting, literature, theatre, dance, film, architecture, and music.

Expressionist painters had many influences, among them Edvard Munch, Vincent van Gogh, and several African artists. They were also aware of the Fauvist movement in Paris, which influenced Expressionism's tendency toward arbitrary colors and jarring compositions.

Die Brücke

In 1905, a group of four German artists, led by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, formed Die Brücke (the Bridge) in the city of Dresden. Later members were Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, and Otto Mueller. The group aimed to eschew the prevalent traditional academic style and find a new mode of artistic expression, which would form a bridge (hence the name) between the past and the present. They responded both to past artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Matthias Grünewald, and Lucas Cranach the Elder, as well as contemporary international avant-garde movements. As part of the affirmation of their national heritage, they revived older media, particularly woodcut prints. Die Brücke is considered to be a key group of the German Expressionist movement, though they did not use the word itself. The group is often compared to both Primitivism and Fauvism due to their use of high-keyed, non-naturalistic color to express extreme emotion like the Fauvists and a crude drawing technique that eschewed complete abstraction, like the Primitivists.

Der Blaue Reiter

A few years later, in 1911, a like-minded group of young artists formed Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) in Munich. The group was founded by a number of Russian emigrants, including Wassily Kandinsky, Alexej von Jawlensky, Marianne von Werefkin, and native German artists, such as Franz Marc, August Macke, and Gabriele Münter. Like Die Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter is considered a major feature of the German Expressionist movement.

Within the group, artistic approaches and aims varied from artist to artist, however, there was a shared desire to express spiritual truths through their art. Der Blaue Reiter as a group believed in the promotion of modern art, the connection between visual art and

music, the spiritual and symbolic associations of color, and a spontaneous, intuitive approach to painting. Members were interested in European medieval art and Primitivism, as well as the contemporary, non-figurative art scene in France. As a result of their encounters with Cubist, Fauvist and Rayonist ideas, they moved towards abstract art.

Kathe Kollwitz

Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) was a German painter, printmaker, and sculptor whose work offered an eloquent and often searing account of the human condition, and the tragedy of war, in the first half of the 20th century. Initially her work was grounded in Naturalism, and later took on Expressionistic qualities. Inspired by a performance of Gerhart Hauptmann's The Weavers, which dramatized the oppression of the Silesian weavers in Langembielau and their failed revolt in 1842, Kollwitz produced a cycle of six works on the Weavers theme. Rather than a literal illustration of the drama, the works were a free and naturalistic expression of the workers' misery, hope, courage, and, eventually, doom. The Weavers became Kollwitz' most widely acclaimed work.

Mother with her Dead Son by Käthe Kollwitz: This Kollwitz sculpture is a WWII war memorial.

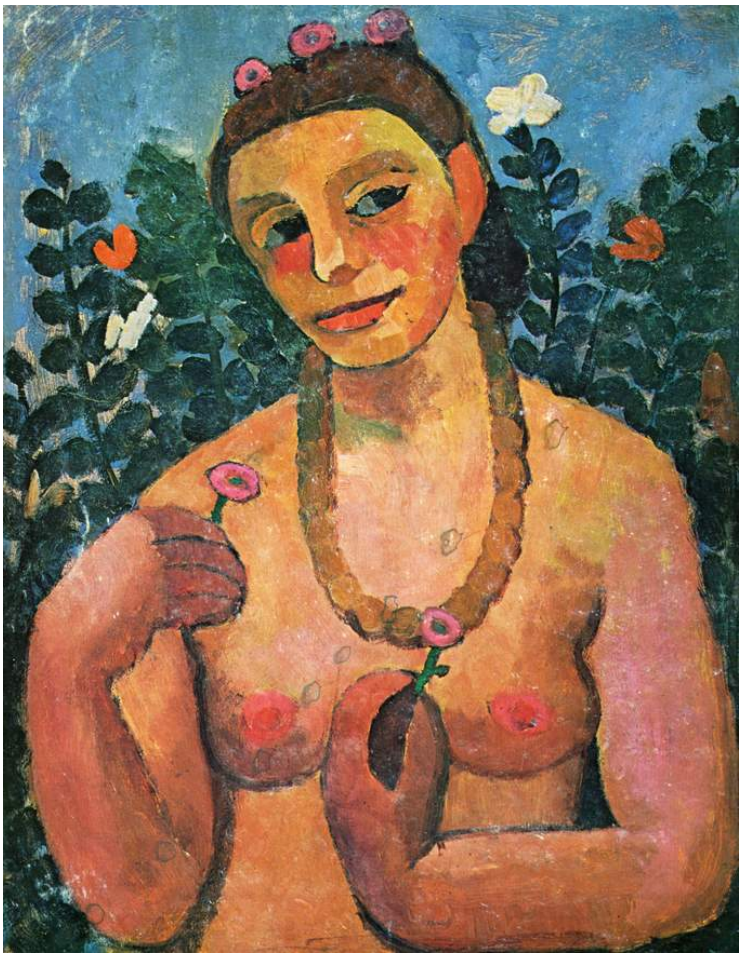
Egon Schiele

Egon Schiele (1890–1918) was an Austrian painter. A protégé of Gustav Klimt, Schiele was a major figurative painter in the early 20th century. His work is noted for its intensity, as well as for the many self-portraits he produced. The twisted body shapes and expressive line that characterize Schiele's paintings and drawings mark the artist as an early exponent of Expressionism. Schiele was influenced by his mentor, Klimt, as well as by Edvard Munch, Jan Toorop, and Vincent van Gogh. Schiele explored themes not only of the human form, but also of human sexuality. Many viewed Schiele's work as being grotesque, erotic, pornographic, or disturbing, focusing on sex, death, and discovery.

Sitzender weiblicher Akt mit aufgestützen Ellbogen by Egon Schiele: Schiele's depiction of female nudes scandalized his contemporaries.

Paula Mendersohn-Becker

Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907) was a German painter and one of the most important representatives of early Expressionism. In a brief career, cut short by her death at the age of 31, she created a number of groundbreaking images of great intensity. Modersohn-Becker studied briefly at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and was influenced by French post impressionists Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin. On her last trip to Paris in 1906, she produced a series of paintings about which she felt great excitement and satisfaction. During this period of painting, she produced her initial nude self-portraits—something unprecedented by a female painter—and portraits of friends such as Rainer Maria Rilke and Werner Sombart.



Selbstporträt by Paula Modersohn-Becker, 1906: Female nude self-portraits were uncommon subjects in this era.

Abstract Sculpture

Modern abstract sculpture developed alongside other avant-garde movements of the early 20th century like Cubism and Surrealism.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the evolution of abstract sculpture through the periods of Cubism and Surrealism, naming the important works of Rodin, Picasso, Duchamp, and Brâncuşi

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Auguste Rodin is seen as the progenitor of modern sculpture.
- Picasso and fellow cubist artists developed new means of constructing works of art using collage, or sculptural assemblage using disparate materials. This is known as Cubist constructionism.
- Surrealism further expanded upon contemporary definitions of sculpture by introducing the concept of the ” readymade.”
- Constantin Brâncuşi rejected naturalism in sculpture as well as any form of representational art. His minimal, abstract artworks attempt to depict the essence of an object.

Key Terms

- **abstract art**: Art that is not intended to depict objects in the natural world, but instead uses color and form in a non-representational way.

- **naturalism**: A artistic movement that seeks to encapsulate reality or familiar experience in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment.
- **coulage**: Automatic or involuntary sculpture made by pouring a molten material (such as metal, wax, or chocolate) into cold water. As the material cools it takes on what appears to be a random (or aleatoric) form, though the physical properties of the materials involved may lead to a conglomeration of discs or spheres.

Rodin

Auguste Rodin, along with artists like Edgar Degas and Paul Gauguin, developed a radical new approach to the creation of sculpture in the 19th century. Rodin was a naturalist, less concerned with monumental expression than with character and emotion. Departing from centuries of tradition, he turned away from the idealism of the Greeks and the decorative beauty of the Baroque and neo-Baroque movements. His sculpture emphasized the individual and the concreteness of flesh, suggesting emotion through detailed, textured surfaces, and the interplay of light and shadow.

The modern sculpture movement essentially began during the Rodin exhibit at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900. At this event, Rodin showed his *Burghers of Calais*,*Balzac* and Victor Hugo statues, along with *The Thinker*. Though all of these are representational works of art, Rodin's approach to form paved the way for increasingly experimental and abstract art.

The Thinker by Auguste Rodin: Rodin's experiments with form, visible in *The Thinker*, launched modern abstract sculpture.

Influence of Cubism

Cubist sculpture developed in parallel with Cubist painting, centered in Paris beginning around 1909 and evolving through the early 1920s. The style is most closely associated with the formal experiments of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Others were quick to follow Braque and Picasso's lead in Paris, including Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Alexander Archipenko, Joseph Csaky, Jacques Lipchitz, Henri Laurens, and Ossip Zadkine.

During his period of Cubist innovation, Picasso revolutionized the art of sculpture by combining disparate objects and materials into one sculptural work—the sculptural equivalent of collage in two dimensional art. Just as collage was a radical development in two dimensional art, so was Cubist construction a radical development in three dimensional sculpture.

Head of a Woman by Picasso, 1909: Picasso was a pioneer in early 20th century Cubist sculpture.

Influence of Surrealism

The advent of Surrealism led to objects being described as “sculpture” that would not have been termed as such previously. Surrealist sculpture made use of many of the same techniques as other forms of Surrealist art, such as games to tap into the unconscious mind such as coulage, a kind of automatic or involuntary sculpture made by pouring a molten material into cold water. As the material cools it takes on what appears to be a random form, though the physical properties of the materials involved may lead to a conglomeration of discs or spheres. The artist may use a variety of techniques to affect the outcome. Involuntary sculpture is described by Surrealists as sculpture created by absent-mindedly manipulating something, such as rolling and unrolling a movie ticket, bending a paper clip, etc.

Duchamp

Marcel Duchamp had a deep impact on the evolution of abstraction in sculpture. He originated the use of the “found object” or “readymade” with pieces like *Fountain* (1917), a urinal that was displayed as art. Duchamp experimented a great deal with sculpture, creating readymades, assemblages, and kinetic works. His notion that anything can be art that an artist names art is an idea that has resonated throughout many historical and contemporary movements. Though never considered himself to be a Surrealist, he was involved socially with many key members of the movement and his ideas were of influence.

Duchamp participated in the design of the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition, which was held at the *Galerie des Beaux-arts*, Paris. The show featured more than 60 artists from different countries, including approximately 300 paintings, objects, collages,

photographs, and installations. The surrealists wanted to create an exhibition which in itself would be a creative act, and André Breton named Duchamp, Wolfgang Paalen, Man Ray, Salvador Dali, and Max Ernst to help do so.

Brâncuşi

The work of Constantin Brâncuşi at the beginning of the century paved the way for later abstract sculpture. In revolt against the naturalism of Rodin and his late 19th-century contemporaries, Brâncuşi distilled subjects down to their essences as illustrated by his *Bird in Space* series (1924). These elegantly refined abstract forms became synonymous with 20th century sculpture.

Brâncuşi's impact, with his vocabulary of reduction and abstraction, is seen throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and exemplified by artists including Gaston Lachaise, Sir Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore, Alberto Giacometti, Joan Miró, Ásmundur Sveinsson, Julio González, Pablo Serrano, and Jacques Lipchitz.

Fountain by Marcel Duchamp: Duchamp's appropriation of a urinal as a piece of art challenged the prevailing definition of sculpture.

Dada and Surrealism

Dada and Surrealism were multidisciplinary cultural movements of the European avant-garde that emerged in Zurich and Paris respectively during the time of WWI.

Learning Objectives

Identify the origins, characteristics, and political ideologies of Dada

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Dada was a political movement opposed to artistic and social conformity as well as the capitalist forces that led to WWI.
- Dada artists worked in non-traditional media including collage, photomontage, and assemblage. Dada artist Michel Duchamp pioneered the notion of the "readymade;" everyday objects appropriated for artistic purposes.

- Dada spread throughout Europe and North America following WWI; by the early 1920s the center of Dada activity was Paris.
- Dada informed many of the major avant-garde movements of the 20th century century, including Surrealism and Social Realism.
- Surrealism began in the 1920s and had a lot in common with Dadaism.
- Surrealist works drew inspiration from intuition, the power of the unconscious mind, and various psychological schools of thought.
- Surrealist artists and writers regarded their work as an expression of the philosophical movement, with the artwork being an artifact.

Key Terms

- **readymade**: Everyday objects found or purchased and declared art. The readymades of Marcel Duchamp are ordinary manufactured objects that the artist selected and modified as an antidote to what he called "retinal art." By simply choosing the object (or objects) and repositioning, joining, titling, and signing it, the object became art.
- **collage**: A composite object or collection (abstract or concrete) created by the assemblage of various media; especially for a work of art like text, film, etc.
- **social realism**: An artistic movement that depicted social and racial injustice and economic hardship through unvarnished pictures of life's struggles.

Dadaism

Dada was a multi-disciplinary art movement that rejected the prevailing artistic standards by producing "anti-art" cultural works. Dadaism was intensely anti-war, anti-bourgeois, and held strong political affinities with the radical left. For many participants, the movement was a protest against the bourgeois nationalist and colonialist interests, which many Dadaists believed were the root cause of the war, and against the cultural and intellectual conformity—in art and more broadly in society—that corresponded to the war. Many Dadaists believed that the reason and logic of bourgeois capitalist society had led people into war. They expressed their rejection of that ideology in artistic expression that appeared to reject logic and embrace chaos and irrationality.

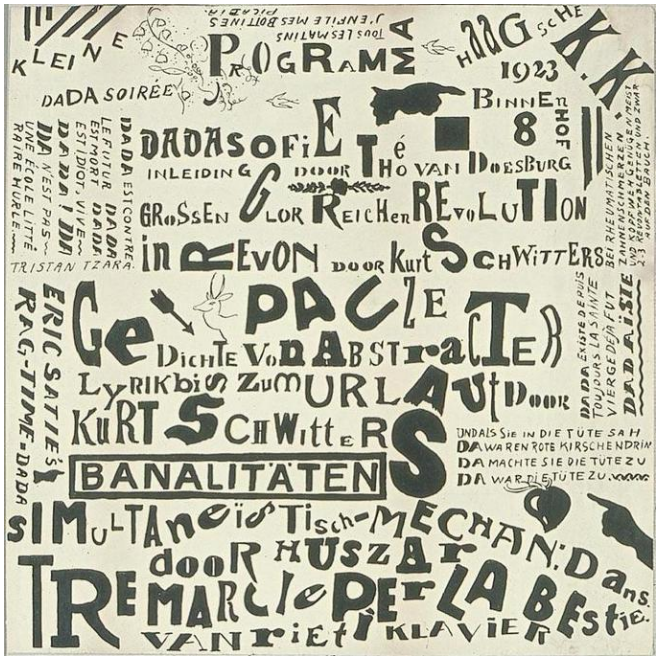
The origin of the name Dada is unclear. Some believe that it is a nonsensical word while others maintain that it originates from the Romanian artists Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's frequent use of the words "da, da," meaning "yes, yes" in Romanian. Another theory posits that the name "Dada" came during a meeting of when a knife stuck into a French–German dictionary happened to point to *dada*, a French word for "hobbyhorse." Likely, the origin of the name Dada is another attempt to devalue a system of logic, namely that of language.

Dada began in Zurich in 1916. Key figures in the Dada movement included Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Hans Arp, and Raoul Hausmann, among others. The movement influenced later styles like avant-garde, and movements including Surrealism, Nouveau réalisme, pop art and Fluxus.

Plaque commemorating the birth of Dada movement: This plaque is from the Cabaret Voltaire, the first venue where Dada artists showcased their work in 1916.

Dada was an informal international movement with participants in Europe and North America that employed all kinds of media but are known especially for collage, writing, photomontage and performance. Dadaists worked in collage, creating compositions by pasting together transportation tickets, maps, plastic wrappers and other artifacts of daily life. Dada artists also worked in photomontage, a variation on collage that utilized actual or reproductions of photographs printed in the press. In Cologne, Max Ernst used photographs taken from the front during World War I to comment on the war. Another variation on collage used by Dadaists was assemblage, the assembly of everyday objects to produce meaningful or meaningless pieces of work, including war objects and trash.

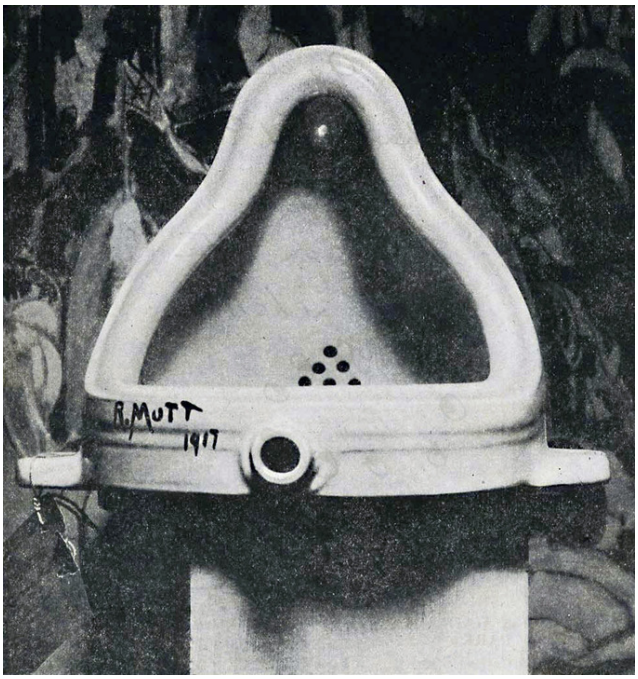
When World War I ended in 1918, most of the Zurich Dadaists returned to their home countries, while some began Dada activities in other cities.



Dada poster from 1923: This poster for a Dada soiree references the medium of collage.

Like Zurich, New York City was a refuge for writers and artists from World War I. Frenchmen Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia met American artist Man Ray in New York City in 1915. The trio soon became the center of radical anti-art activities in the United States.

During this time, Duchamp began exhibiting “readymades” (everyday objects found or purchased and declared art) and was active in the Society of Independent Artists. In 1917, he submitted the now famous Fountain to the Society of Independent Artists exhibition. Initially an object of scorn within the arts community, the Fountain has since become almost canonized by some as one of the most recognizable modernist works of sculpture. The committee presiding over Britain’s prestigious Turner Prize in 2004, for example, called it “the most influential work of modern art.”



Fountain by Marcel Duchamp: Duchamp’s appropriation of a urinal as a piece of art challenged the prevailing definition of sculpture.

By 1921, most of the original Dadaists moved to Paris, where Dada experienced its last major incarnation. Inspired by Tristan Tzara, Paris Dada soon issued manifestos, organized demonstrations, staged performances, and a number of journals.

While broad, the Dada movement was unstable. By 1924, artists had gone on to other ideas and movements including surrealism and social realism. Some theorists argue that Dada was the beginning of postmodern art.

Surrealism

Surrealism was a cultural movement beginning in the 1920s that sprang directly out of Dadaism and overlapped in many senses. Surrealist works drew inspiration from intuition, the power of the unconscious mind, and various psychological schools of thought. The work often features unexpected juxtapositions, non sequiturs, and elements of surprise.

First and foremost, Surrealist artists and writers regarded their work as an expression of the philosophical movement, with the artwork being an artifact. Leader André Breton was explicit in his assertion that Surrealism was above all a revolutionary movement. Surrealism developed out of the Dada activities during World War I and the most important center of the movement was Paris. From the 1920s onward, the movement spread around the globe, eventually affecting the visual arts, literature, film, and music of many countries and languages, as well as political thought and practice, philosophy, and social theory.

As the Surrealists developed their philosophy, they believed that Surrealism would advocate the idea that ordinary and representative expression was vital and important, but that expression must be fully open to the imagination. Freud’s work with free association, dream analysis, and the unconscious was of utmost importance to the Surrealists as they developed methods to liberate their imaginations.

Like Dada, Surrealism aimed to revolutionize human experience, in terms of the personal, cultural, social, and political aspects. Surrealists wanted to free people from false rationality, and also from restrictive customs and structures. Breton proclaimed that the true aim of Surrealism was “long live the social revolution, and it alone!”

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Art History/20th Century. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/20th_Century. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- History of Europe. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Europe%23From_revolution_to_imperialism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- urbanization. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/urbanization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse%23Fauvism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fauvism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Fauvism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- pointillism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pointillism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Post-Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Post-Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fauvism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Fauvism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Picasso's African Period. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasso's_African_Period. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pablo Picasso. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pablo_Picasso%23Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/Movements. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/Movements%23Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- primitivism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/primitivism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Abstract Speed + Sound. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_Speed_%2B_Sound. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism%23Cubism_in_other_fields. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Futurism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Constructivism (art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/20th Century. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/20th_Century%23Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- constructivism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/constructivism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- futurism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/futurism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- divisionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/divisionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky_ca._1919.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/1d/'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky,_ca._1919.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Futurism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Egon Schiele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Egon_Schiele. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Paula Modersohn-Becker. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paula_Modersohn-Becker. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Ku00e4the Kollwitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%A4the_Kollwitz. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- German Expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- expressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fauvism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Fauvism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Weimar Republic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Weimar_Republic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky_ca._1919.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/1d/'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky,_ca._1919.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Futurism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Egon Schiele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Egon_Schiele. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paula Modersohn-Becker. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paula_Modersohn-Becker. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ku00e4the Kollwitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%A4the_Kollwitz. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Thinker. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thinker. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Modern sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Auguste Rodin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Rodin%23Aesthetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubist sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubist_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/coulage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- naturalism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/naturalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- abstract art. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abstract_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky_ca._1919.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/1d/'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky,_ca._1919.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Futurism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Egon Schiele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Egon_Schiele. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paula Modersohn-Becker. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paula_Modersohn-Becker. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ku00e4the Kollwitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%A4the_Kollwitz. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Thinker. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: Wikimedia. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dada. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dada. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- readymade. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/readymade. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- social realism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/social%20realism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- collage. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/collage. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Royal Irish Rifles ration party Somme July 1916. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Irish_Rifles_ration_party_Somme_July_1916.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Henri Matisse. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Andru00e9 Derain. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Derain. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky_ca._1919.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/1/1d/'Proun_Vrashchenia'_by_El_Lissitzky,_ca._1919.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Futurism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Egon Schiele. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Egon_Schiele. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Paula Modersohn-Becker. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Paula_Modersohn-Becker. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ku00e4the Kollwitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%A4the_Kollwitz. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Thinker. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: Wikimedia. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Tristan Tzara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tristan_Tzara. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Tristan Tzara. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tristan_Tzara. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 29.1: European Art in the Early 20th Century is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.2: Europe from 1920-1945 CE

Soviet Constructivism

Constructivism, an artistic and architectural philosophy that originated in Russia in 1919, rejected the idea of autonomous art.

Learning Objective

State the impetus behind Soviet Constructivism and its artistic characteristics

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As much as involving themselves in designs for industry, the Constructivists worked on public festivals and street designs for the post-October revolution Bolshevik government.
- The canonical work of Constructivism was Vladimir Tatlin's proposal for the Monument to the Third International (1919), which combined a machine aesthetic with dynamic components celebrating technology such as searchlights and projection screens.
- The First Working Group of Constructivists defined Constructivism as the combination of faktura—the particular material properties of an object—and tektonika, its spatial presence.

Key Terms

- ROSTA Windows: Rosta Windows or Satirical Rosta Windows (Russian: О с Р, Okna satiry Rosta) were stencil-replicated propaganda posters created by artists and poets within the Rosta (Russian Telegraph Agency) system, under the supervision of the Chief Committee of Political Education during 1919–21. Inheriting the Russian design traditions of lubok and rayok, the main topics were current political events. They were usually displayed in windows, hence the name.
- Vladimir Tatlin: (1885–1953) A Russian and Soviet painter and architect. With Kazimir Malevich he was one of the two most important figures in the Russian avant-garde art movement of the 1920s, and he later became an important artist in the Constructivist movement. He is most famous for his attempts to create the giant tower, The Monument to the Third International.
- constructivism: An artistic and architectural philosophy that originated in Russia beginning in 1919, which was a rejection of the idea of autonomous art. The movement was in favor of art as a practice for social purposes. Constructivism had a great effect on modern art movements of the 20th century, influencing major trends such as Bauhaus and the De Stijl movement.
  Suprematism: A genre of abstract art based on simple, geometric forms.

Overview

Constructivism was an artistic and architectural philosophy that originated in Russia beginning in 1919. At the heart of the movement was a rejection of the idea of autonomous art. The movement was in favor of art as a practice for social purposes and participation in industry. Constructivism had a considerable effect on modern art movements of the 20th century, influencing major trends such as Bauhaus and the De Stijl movement. Its influence was pervasive, with major impacts upon architecture, graphic and industrial design, theatre, film, dance, fashion, and to some extent music.

Origins and Evolution

The term Construction Art was first used as a derisive term by Kazimir Malevich, an artist of the Suprematist movement, to describe the work of Alexander Rodchenko in 1917. Constructivism as theory and practice was derived largely from a series of debates at INKhUK (Institute of Artistic Culture) in Moscow, from 1920–22. After deposing its first chairman, Wassily Kandinsky, for his "mysticism," The First Working Group of Constructivists (including Liubov Popova, Alexander Vesnin, Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, and the theorists Alexei Gan, Boris Arvatov, and Osip Brik) would develop a definition of Constructivism as the combination of *faktura*—the particular material properties of an object—and *tektonika*, its spatial presence. Initially the Constructivists worked on three-dimensional constructions as a means of participating in industry: the OBMOKhU (Society of Young Artists) exhibition showed these three-dimensional compositions by Rodchenko, Stepanova, Karl Ioganson, and the

Stenberg Brothers. Later the definition would be extended to designs for two-dimensional works such as books or posters, with montage and factography becoming important concepts.

Public Art

As much as involving themselves in designs for industry, the Constructivists worked on public festivals and street designs for the post-October revolution Bolshevik government. Perhaps the most famous of these was in Vitebsk, where Malevich's UNOVIS Group painted propaganda plaques and buildings (the best known being El Lissitzky's 1919 poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*). Inspired by Vladimir Mayakovsky's declaration "the streets our brushes, the squares our palettes," artists and designers participated in public life during the Civil War. A striking instance was the proposed festival for the Comintern congress in 1921 by Alexander Vesnin and Liubov Popova, which resembled the constructions of the OBMOKhU exhibition as well as their work for the theater.

There was a great deal of overlap during this period between Constructivism and Proletkult; the ideas of Proletkult concerning the need to create an entirely new culture struck a chord with the Constructivists. In addition, some Constructivists were heavily involved in the "ROSTA Windows," a Bolshevik public information campaign carried out around 1920. Some of the most famous of these were by the poet-painter Vladimir Mayakovsky and Vladimir Lebedev.

Agitprop poster by Mayakovsky: Mayakovsky worked for the Russian State Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) creating—both graphic and text—satirical Agitprop posters.

Tatlin's Vision Versus Gabo's

The canonical work of Constructivism was Vladimir Tatlin's proposal for the Monument to the Third International (1919), which combined a machine aesthetic with dynamic components celebrating technology such as searchlights and projection screens. Gabo publicly criticized Tatlin's design, saying he should "Either create functional houses and bridges or create pure art, not both." This position had already caused a major controversy in the Moscow group in 1920, when Gabo and Pevsner's Realistic Manifesto asserted a spiritual core for the movement. This was opposed to the utilitarian and adaptable version of Constructivism held by Tatlin and Rodchenko. Tatlin's work was immediately hailed by artists in Germany as a revolution in art. A 1920 photograph shows George Grosz and John Heartfield holding a placard saying "Art is Dead–Long Live Tatlin's Machine Art. " The designs for the tower were published in Bruno Taut's magazine *Fruhlicht*.

Tatlin's tower started a period of exchange of ideas between Moscow and Berlin, something reinforced by El Lissitzky and Ilya Ehrenburg's Soviet-German magazine *Veshch-Gegenstand-Objet*, which spread the idea of "Construction art," as did the

Constructivist exhibits at the 1922 Russische Ausstellung in Berlin, organised by Lissitzky. A “Constructivist international” was formed, which met with Dadaists and De Stijl artists in Germany in 1922. Participants in this short-lived international group included Lissitzky, Hans Richter, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.

However, the idea of “art” was becoming anathema to the Russian Constructivists. The INKhUK debates of 1920–22 had culminated in the theory of Productivism propounded by Osip Brik and others, which demanded direct participation in industry and the end of easel painting. Tatlin was one of the first to attempt to transfer his talents to industrial production, with his designs for an economical stove, for workers’ overalls, and for furniture. The Utopian element in Constructivism was maintained by his “letatlin,” a flying machine which he worked on until the 1930s.

Dutch Rationalist Architecture

The Amsterdam School is a style of architecture that lasted from 1910 to 1930, with the aim of creating a total architectural experience.

Learning Objective

Indicate the unique aspects of Dutch Rationalism and its architectural elements

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Buildings of the Amsterdam School are characterized by brick construction with complicated masonry with a rounded or organic appearance, relatively traditional massing, and the integration of an elaborate scheme of building elements inside and out.
- Imbued with socialist ideals, the Amsterdam School style was often applied to working-class housing estates, local institutions, and schools.
- The most important architects and virtuoso artists of the Amsterdam School were Michel de Klerk and Piet Kramer.

Key Terms

- Amsterdam School: A style of architecture that arose from 1910 through about 1930 in the Netherlands, with the aim of creating a total architectural experience, interior and exterior.
- Eduard Cuypers: A Dutch architect considered to have originated the Amsterdam School of architecture (1859–June 1, 1927, The Hague).
- Brick Expressionism: A specific variant of expressionist architecture that uses bricks, tiles, or clinker bricks as the main visible building material. Buildings in the style were erected mostly in the 1920s, primarily in Germany.

The Amsterdam School (Dutch: Amsterdamse School) is a style of architecture that arose in 1910 and lasted until about 1930 in The Netherlands. The Amsterdam School movement is considered to be part of international Expressionist architecture, sometimes linked to German Brick Expressionism. Buildings of the Amsterdam School are characterized by their use of bricks, rounded or organic appearance, relatively traditional massing, and the integration of an elaborate scheme of building elements inside and out such as decorative masonry, art glass, wrought ironwork, spires or “ladder” windows (with horizontal bars), and integrated architectural sculpture. The aim was to create a total architectural experience, interior and exterior.

Imbued with socialist ideals, the Amsterdam School style was often applied to working-class housing estates, local institutions, and schools. For many Dutch towns, Hendrik Berlage designed the new urban schemes, while the architects of the Amsterdam School were responsible for the buildings. With regard to the architectural style, Michel de Klerk had a different vision than Berlage. In the magazine “Bouwkundig Weekblad 45/1916,” Michel de Klerk criticized Berlage’s recent buildings in the style of Dutch Traditionalism. In this context, the Stock Exchange by Berlage of 1905 can be seen as the starting point of traditionalist architecture.

The Amsterdam School had its origins in the office of architect Eduard Cuypers in Amsterdam. Although Cuypers was not a progressive architect himself, he gave his employees plenty of opportunity to develop. The three leaders of the Amsterdam School Michel de Klerk, Johan van der Mey, and Piet Kramer all worked for Cuypers until about 1910. In 1905, Amsterdam was the first city to establish a building code, and the city hired Johan van der Mey afterwards, in the special position as “Aesthetic Advisor,” to

bring artistic unity and vision to its built environment. Van der Mey's major commission, the 1912 cooperative-commercial Scheepvaarthuis (Shipping House), is considered the starting point of the movement, and the three of them collaborated on that building. The movement and its followers played an important role in Berlage's overall plans for the expansion of Amsterdam.

The Scheepvaarthuis, Amsterdam: The 1912 cooperative-commercial Scheepvaarthuis (Shipping House) is considered the starting point of the Amsterdam School movement.

The most important architects and virtuoso artists of the Amsterdam School were Michel de Klerk and Piet Kramer. Other members included Jan Gratama (who gave it its name), Berend Tobia Boeyinga, P. H. Endt, H. Th. Wijdeveld, J. F. Staal, C. J. Blaauw, and P. L. Marnette. The journal Wendingen ("Windings" or "Changes"), published between 1918 and 1931, was the magazine of the Amsterdam School movement.

After De Klerk died in 1923, the style lost its importance. The De Bijenkorf Store in the Hague by Piet Kramer of 1926 is considered to be the last example of "classic" Amsterdam School Expressionism.

German Bauhaus Art

The Bauhaus was a school in Germany that combined crafts and the fine arts and was famous for its functionalist approach to design.

Learning Objective

Describe Bauhaus design principles and their impact on modern art, architecture, and design

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Bauhaus had a profound influence on subsequent developments in art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography.
- The Bauhaus style was marked by the absence of ornamentation and by harmony between function and overall design.
- The design innovations commonly associated with Gropius and the Bauhaus—radically simplified forms, rationality, functionality, and the idea that mass-production was reconcilable with the individual artistic spirit—were already partly developed in Germany before the Bauhaus was founded.

Key Terms

- Bauhaus: A style in Modernist architecture and modern design, popularized at the "Staatliches Bauhaus" originally in Weimar, Germany.
- Walter Gropius: (1883—1969) A German architect and founder of the Bauhaus School who is widely regarded as one of the pioneering masters of modern architecture.

The Bauhaus was a school in Germany that operated from 1919 to 1933, combined crafts and the fine arts, and was famous for the functional design approach it taught and publicized. Despite its name meaning "house of construction" in German and the founder, Walter Gropius, being an architect, the Bauhaus did not have an architecture department during its first years. Nonetheless, the

school was founded on the idea of "total" creativity, or *gesamtkunstwerk*, in which all arts would be brought together. Many well-known artists attended the Bauhaus, including Josef Albers, Anni Albers, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Max Bill, and Herbert Bayer. The Bauhaus style became one of the most influential currents in Modernist architecture and modern design, having a profound influence on subsequent developments in art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography.

The most important influence on Bauhaus was Modernism, a cultural movement with origins as far back as the 1880s that had already made its presence felt in Germany before the World War. The design innovations commonly associated with Gropius and the Bauhaus—radically simplified forms, rationality, functionality, and the idea that mass-production was reconcilable with the individual artistic spirit—were already partly developed in Germany before the Bauhaus was founded.

Germany's defeat in World War I, the fall of the German monarchy, and the abolition of censorship under the new, liberal Weimar Republic allowed an upsurge in artistic experimentation. Many Germans of left-wing views were influenced by the cultural radicalization that followed the Russian Revolution. Yet the political influences can be overstated: Gropius himself did not have radical views and said Bauhaus was entirely apolitical. Another significant influence was the 19th century English designer William Morris, who had argued that art should meet the needs of society and that there should be no distinction between form and function. Thus the Bauhaus style was marked by the absence of ornamentation and by harmony between function and overall design.

The school existed in three German cities: Weimar from 1919 to 1925, Dessau from 1925 to 1932, and Berlin from 1932 to 1933, under three different architect-directors: Walter Gropius from 1919 to 1928, Hannes Meyer from 1928 to 1930, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe from 1930 until 1933, when the school was closed by its own leadership under pressure from the Nazi regime, having being painted as a centre of communist intellectualism. Although the school was closed, the staff continued to spread its idealistic precepts as they left Germany and emigrated all over the world.

The influence of the Bauhaus on design education was significant. One of the main objectives of the Bauhaus was to unify art, craft, and technology, and this approach was incorporated into the curriculum of the Bauhaus. The structure of the Bauhaus *Vorkurs* (preliminary course) reflected a pragmatic approach to integrating theory and application. In their first year, students learned the basic elements and principles of design and color theory, and experimented with a range of materials and processes. This approach to design education became a common feature of architectural and design school in many countries.

The Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany: Bauhaus means "house of construction."

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- constructivism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/constructivism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Malevich. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Malevich. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ROSTA Windows. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/ROSTA%20Windows. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Vladamir Tatlin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir%20Tatlin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Constructivism (art). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_(art). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Suprematism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Suprematism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Plakat mayakowski gross. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Plakat_mayakowski_gross.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Amsterdam School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Amsterdam_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Eduard Cuypers. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard%20Cuypers. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Brick Expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Brick%20Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Amsterdam Scheepvaarthuis 002. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Amsterdam_Scheepvaarthuis_002.JPG. **License**: *Other*. **License Terms**: GNU FDL
- AEG Turbine Factory. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/AEG%20Turbine%20Factory. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Walter Gropius. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter%20Gropius. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bauhaus. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Bauhaus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 29.2: Europe from 1920-1945 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.3: Modernism in America

American Painting: The Ashcan School

The Ashcan School was a movement within American Realism known for portraying scenes of daily life in New York's poorer neighborhoods.

Learning Objectives

Describe the origins and focus of the Ashcan School

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- American Realism arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with works of art that depicted contemporary views of daily life, and the Ashcan School was central to that movement.
- The artists of the Ashcan School rebelled against American Impressionism, contrasting the Impressionists' emphasis on light with Realist works that were darker in tone and captured harsher moments in life.
- Ashcan School artists portrayed prostitutes, drunks, butchered pigs, overflowing tenements, and boxing matches. Their focus on poverty and the daily realities of urban life prompted critics to consider them on the fringe of Modern art.

Key Terms

- **American Realism**: An early 20th century idea in art, music, and literature that reflected contemporary issues and events.
- **American Impressionism**: American Impressionism was a style of painting related to European Impressionism and practiced by American artists in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. American Impressionism is a style of painting characterized by loose brushwork and vivid colors.

Overview

The Ashcan School was a movement within American Realism that came into prominence in New York City during the early 20th century and is best known for works portraying scenes of daily life in New York's poorer neighborhoods.

American Realism

American Realism was a concept that arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in art, music, and literature. Whether it was a portrayal of contemporary culture, or a scenic view of downtown New York City, Realist works depicted a contemporary view of what was happening or what was "real."

In America at the beginning of the 20th century, a new generation of painters, writers, and journalists were coming of age who were interested in creating a new style that reflected city life and an American population that was becoming increasingly more urban as the country entered the new century. American Realism attempted to portray the exhaustion and cultural exuberance of the American landscape and the life of ordinary people at home. Artists used the rapidly growing setting of the city to influence the color, texture, and look of their creative projects.

Pulling away from fantasy and focusing on the grit and reality of daily life, American Realism presented a breakthrough—introducing Modernism, and what it means to be in the present. The Ashcan School, also known as "The Eight," was central to the new American Modernism in the visual arts.

The Ashcan School

The Ashcan School was a group of New York City artists who sought to capture the feel of turn-of-the-century New York through realistic portraits of everyday life. The movement grew out of a group known as The Eight, many of whom had experience as newspaper illustrators, and whose only show together in 1908 created a sensation. These artists were not only depicting Fifth Avenue socialites, but also the lower class and richly textured immigrant cultures. Critics of the time did not always appreciate their choice of subjects, which included alleys, tenements, slum dwellers, and in the case of John French Sloan, taverns frequented by the working class.

Five artists of The Eight, William Glackens, Robert Henri, George Luks, Everett Shinn, and John French Sloan became associated with the Ashcan School. However, the Ashcan School was not an organized group. Instead their unity consisted of a desire to tell truths about the state of the city. The first known use of the “ashcan” terminology in describing the movement was by Art Young in 1916.

Shinn Henri Sloan: Everett Shinn, Robert Henri, and John Sloan, c. 1896 (unidentified photographer, black and white print, 18 x 13 cm.)

The artists of the Ashcan School rebelled against American Impressionism, which was the vanguard of American art at the time. In contrast to the Impressionists’ emphasis on light, their Realist works were generally darker in tone, capturing harsher moments of life and often portraying such subjects as prostitutes, drunks, butchered pigs, overflowing tenements, boxing matches, and wrestlers. It was their frequent, although not total, focus upon poverty and the daily realities of urban life that prompted American critics to consider them to be on the fringe of Modern art.

Both Members of This Club: Both Members of This Club by George Bellows, 1909 (oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art)

Photography in America

Photography developed as an art form throughout the early 20th century largely due to a number of artists who worked to legitimize the medium by moving it into a gallery setting.

Learning Objectives

Describe the establishment of photography as an art form in the early 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In the early 1900s, the Daguerreotype emerged as the most popular and affordable photographic method for the general public.
- In 1884 George Eastman, of Rochester, New York, developed dry gel on paper, or film, to replace the photographic plate so that a photographer no longer needed to carry boxes of plates and toxic chemicals around, further popularizing the medium.
- Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen were instrumental in making photography a fine art, and Stieglitz was especially notable in introducing it into museum collections.
- In addition to his fame as a photographer, Stieglitz is known as a writer, publisher, exhibition organizer, and collector. As an owner of multiple New York art galleries, he introduced many photographers and other artists, including new European avante-garde artists, to the U.S. art world.
- Stieglitz was involved in a number of photographic organizations and journals in New York city throughout his career. He used these platforms to promote photography as a fine art, and contributed to its acceptance in the art world.
- The Photo-Secession movement placed the focus on the role of the photographer as an artist and was characterized by pictorialism, in which pictures and photographic materials were manipulated to emulate the quality of paintings and etchings being produced at that time.

Key Terms

- **abstract**: Free from representational qualities. Abstract art uses a visual language of form, color, and line to create a composition that exists with a degree of independence from visual references in the world.

History of Photography

The history of photography has roots in antiquity with the discovery of the principle of the camera obscura, and the observation that some substances are visibly altered by exposure to light. Thomas Wedgwood is generally accepted to have made the first reliably documented although unsuccessful attempt. In the mid-1820s, Nicéphore Niépce succeeded, but several days of exposure in the camera were required and the earliest results were very crude. Niépce's associate Louis Daguerre went on to develop the Daguerreotype process, the first publicly announced photographic process, which required only minutes of exposure in the camera and produced clear, finely detailed results. It was commercially introduced in 1839, a date generally accepted as the birth year of practical photography.

Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s a number of competing processes were experimented with and distributed to the public in varying degrees. The demand for portraiture that emerged from the middle classes during the Industrial Revolution could not be met in volume and in cost by oil painting, a factor that added to the push for the development of photography. Eventually, the Daguerreotype emerged as the most popular and affordable method for the general public, however, Daguerreotypes were fragile and difficult to copy, and lacked portability as they required plates and toxic chemicals to be carried around.

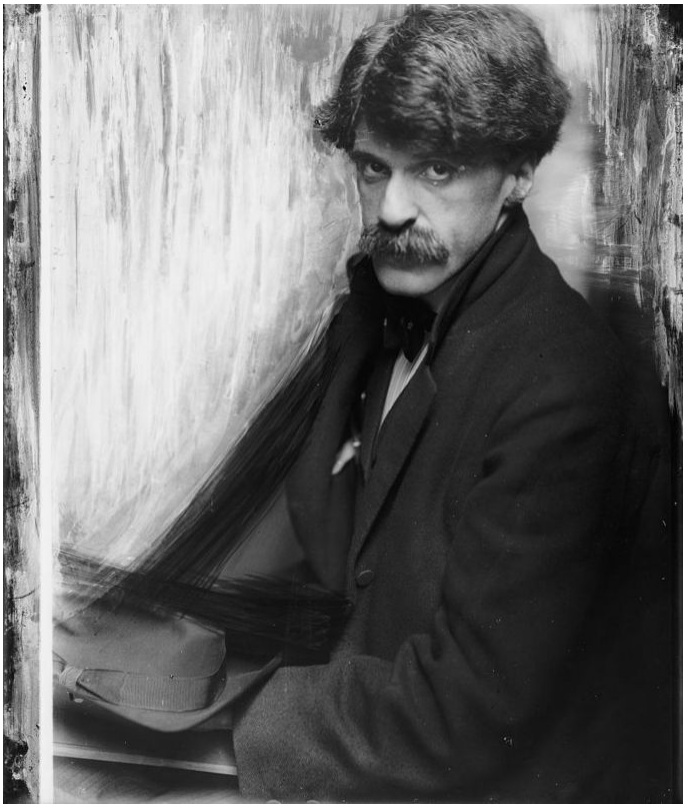
In 1884 George Eastman, of Rochester, New York, developed dry gel on paper, or film, to replace the photographic plate so that a photographer no longer needed to carry boxes of plates and toxic chemicals around. In July 1888 Eastman's Kodak camera went on the market with the slogan "You press the button, we do the rest." Now anyone could take a photograph and leave the complex parts of the process to others, and photography became available for the mass-market in 1901 with the introduction of the Kodak Brownie.

Photography as Art

Successful attempts to make fine art photography can be traced to Victorian era practitioners such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, Oscar Gustave Rejlander, and others. In the U.S., F. Holland Day, Ansel Adams, Alfred Stieglitz, and Edward Steichen were instrumental in making photography a fine art, and Stieglitz was especially notable in introducing it into museum collections. Until the late 1970s several genres predominated, such as nudes, portraits, and natural landscapes. Breakthrough artists in the 1970s and 80s, such as Sally Mann, Robert Mapplethorpe, Robert Farber, and Cindy Sherman, still relied heavily on such genres, although saw them with fresh eyes. Others investigated a snapshot aesthetic approach. American organizations, such as the Aperture Foundation and the Museum of Modern Art, have done much to keep photography at the forefront of the fine arts.

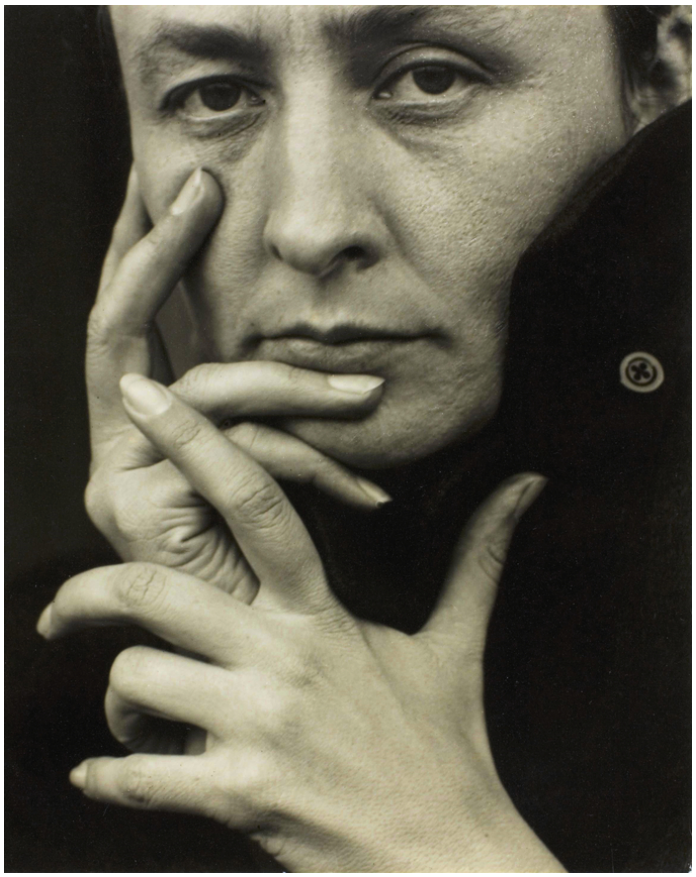
Photo-Secession Movement

Photographer Alfred Steiglitz (1864–1946) led the Photo-Secession movement, a movement that promoted photography as a fine art and sought to raise standards and awareness of art photography. The Photo-Secession movement placed the focus on the role of the photographer as an artist. It was characterized by pictorialism, in which pictures and photographic materials were manipulated to emulate the quality of paintings and etchings being produced at that time. Among the methods used were soft focus; special filters and lens coatings; burning, dodging and/or cropping in the darkroom to edit the content of the image; and alternative printing processes such as sepia toning, carbon printing, platinum printing or gum bichromate processing.



Gertrude Käsebier, *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz*: A picture of Alfred Stieglitz by Gertrude Käsebier, 1902.

Centered in Gallery 291 in New York City from 1902–1916, membership to the Photo-Secession movement was by invitation-only and varied according to Stieglitz's interests. The most prominent members included Edward Steichen, Clarence H. White, Gertrude Käsebier, Frank Eugene, F. Holland Day, and Alvin Langdon Coburn.



Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe, Hands*: Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe, Hands*, 1918.

At the same time, however, photography's use as a tool of realistic documentation mirrored the growth of American Realism in art and sculpture. Many photographers sought to capture everyday life of American people—both the wealthy and the poor—in a realistic and often gritty fashion. Lewis Hine (1874–1940) used light to illuminate the dark areas of social existence in his Pittsburgh Survey (1907), which investigated working and living conditions in Pittsburgh. He later became the photographer for the National Child Labor Committee. Paul Strand (1890–1976) created brutally direct abstractions, close-up portraits, and documented machines and cityscapes.

Precisionist Movement

Edward Weston (1886–1958) would become a leader in the Precisionist Movement, a style that functioned in direct opposition to the Photo-Secession Movement. This movement was the first true use of modernism in photography. It was characterized by sharp focus and carefully framed images. James Van Der Zee (1886–1983) was an African American photographer who became emblematic of the Harlem Renaissance movement. He was best known for his portraits of black New Yorkers and produced the most comprehensive documentation of the period.

Commercial Photography

Commercial photography also expanded during this time, as in the works of Edward Steichen (1879–1973). Steichen broke with Stieglitz toward the end of the Photo-Secession movement and created the first commercial image in 1919, entitled *Pear and Apple.* His work was featured in magazines such as *Vanity Fair*. Ansel Adams (1902–1984) also began his career as a commercial photographer and became widely known for his images of American landscapes.

Ansel Adams, The Tetons and the Snake River, 1942: A typical Ansel Adams photograph featuring the American landscape in black and white.

The Armory Show

The Armory Show of 1913 displayed the work of European avant-garde artists alongside their American counterparts.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of the Armory Show in introducing the artistic styles of Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism to the American public

Key Takeaways

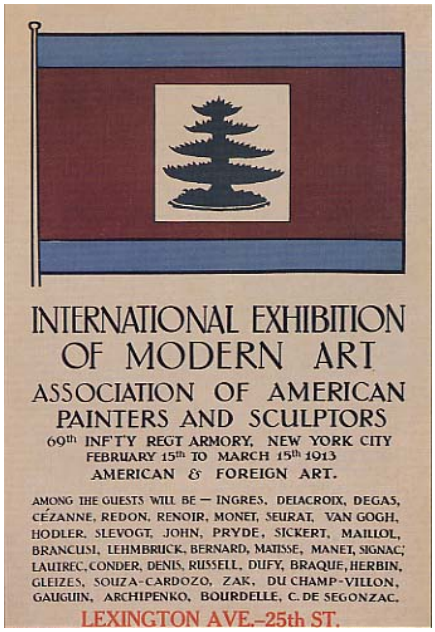
Key Points

- The Armory Show of 1913 displayed about 1,300 works by over 300 artists with the goal of bringing the best avant-garde European art to an American audience.
- Contemporary responses to the European Impressionist, Fauvist, and Cubist works were filled with accusations of quackery, insanity, immorality, and anarchy.
- The Armory Show introduced New Yorkers accustomed to the naturalistic art of American Realism to the styles of European avant-garde artists and served as a catalyst for American artists to create their own artistic language.
- The Armory Show has since evolved into an annual contemporary art fair.

Key Terms

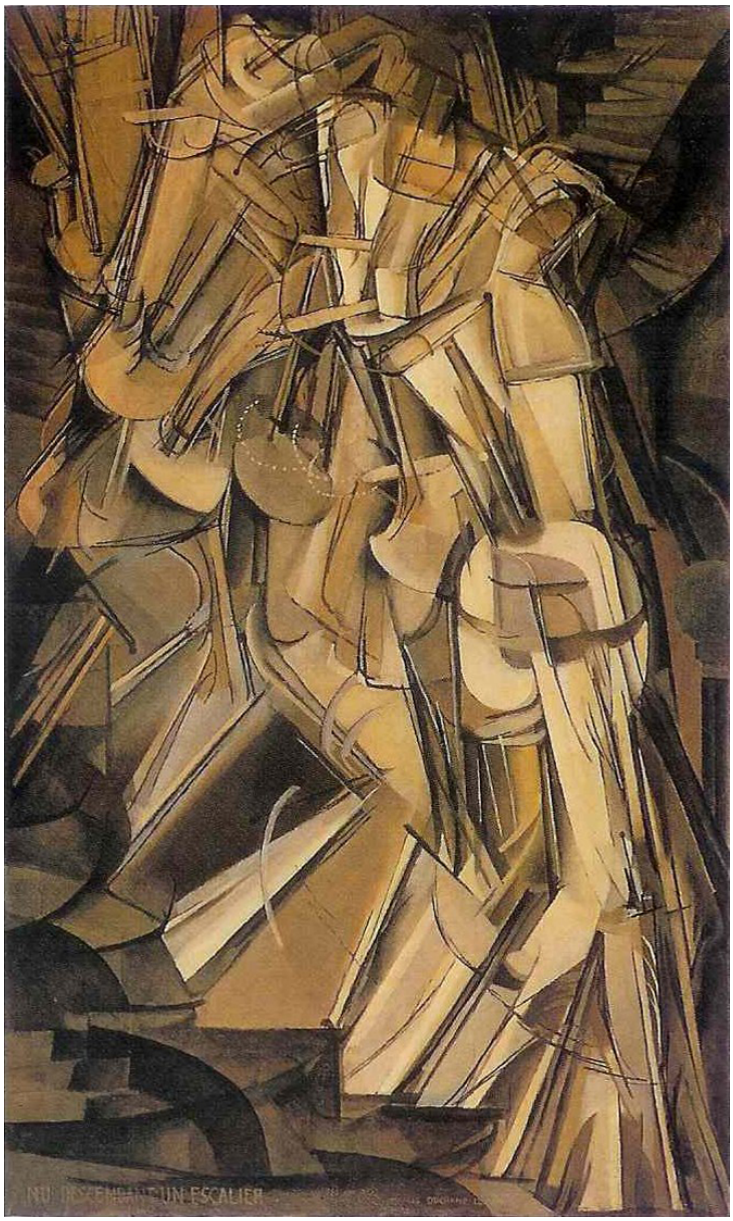
- **Fauvism**: An artistic movement of the last part of the 19th century that emphasized spontaneity and the use of extremely bright colors.
- **Cubism**: An early 20th century avant-garde art movement pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, where objects are analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstracted form.
- **American Realism**: An early 20th century idea in art, music, and literature that reflected contemporary issues and events.

The Armory Show was the first exhibition organized by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors. The exhibition ran in New York City's 69th Regiment Armory from February 17 until March 15, 1913 and displayed about 1,300 paintings, sculptures, and decorative works by over 300 artists. The initial premise of the show was to exhibit the best avant-garde European art alongside the best works of American artists to audiences in New York City, Chicago, and Boston.



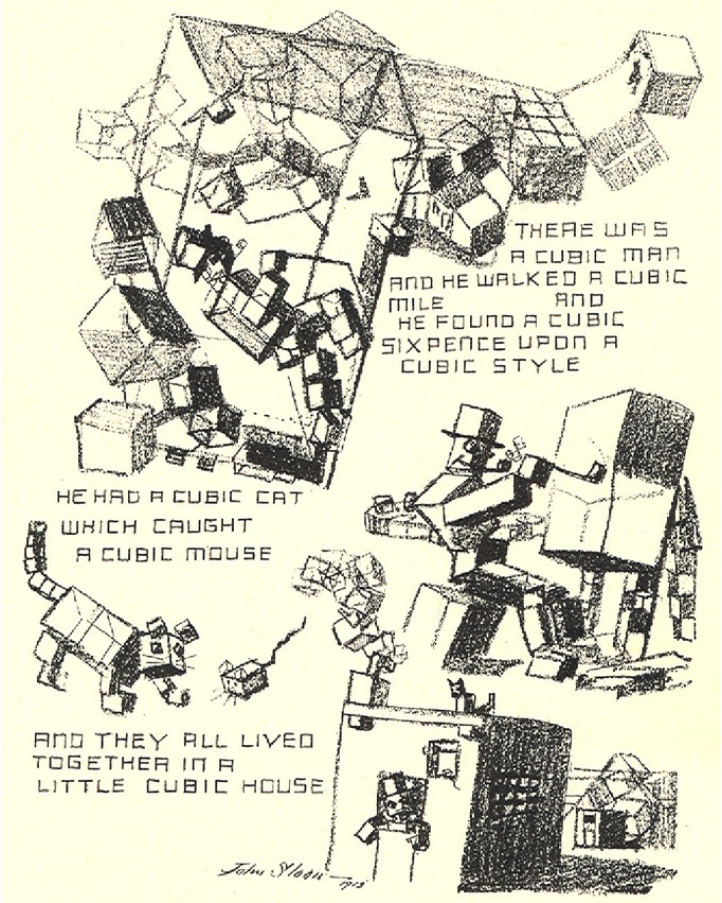
Armory Show Poster, 1913: A poster displaying the name of the show, the time and place of the show, and the featured artists.

Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism were among the European avant-garde schools represented. News reports and reviews of the show were filled with accusations of quackery, insanity, immorality and anarchy, often including parodies, caricatures, and mock exhibitions. Criticism aside, civil authorities did not interfere with the show. Among the scandalously radical works of art were Marcel Duchamp's Cubist/Futurist style *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), in which he expressed motion with successive superimposed images.



Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2 by Marcel Duchamp: Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912, oil on canvas, 58 x 35 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Art critic Julian Street wrote that the work resembled “an explosion in a shingle factory” while cartoonists satirized the piece. Gutzon Borglum, one of the early organizers of the show, labeled this piece “A staircase descending a nude,” while J. F. Griswold, a writer for the *New York Evening Sun*, entitled it “The rude descending a staircase (Rush hour in the subway).” Despite these negative reactions, the purchase of Paul Cézanne’s *Hill of the Poor (View of the Domaine Saint-Joseph)* by the Metropolitan Museum of Art signaled an integration of Modernism into the established New York museums. Duchamp’s brother, going by the “nom de guerre” Jacques Villon, also exhibited at the Armory Show, striking a sympathetic chord with New York collectors.The exhibition went on to the Art Institute of Chicago and then to The Copley Society of Art in Boston.



Caricature of Cubism at the Armory Show: "A Slight Attack of Third Dimentia Brought on by Excessive Study of the Much Talked of Cubist Pictures in the International Exhibition at New York," drawn by John French Sloan in April 1913. Published before 1923.

The Armory Show introduced New Yorkers accustomed to the naturalistic art of American Realism to the styles of the European avant-gardes. The show also served as a catalyst for American artists, who subsequently began to experiment more and became more independent in creating their own artistic language. There have been many exhibitions throughout the 20th century that celebrated the show's legacy. The "New" New York Armory Show was held in piers on the Hudson River in 1994 and has since evolved into an annual contemporary art fair.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- American realism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/American_realism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ashcan School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashcan_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- American Realism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/American%20Realism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- American Impressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/American%20Impressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shinn Henri Sloan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shinn_Henri_Sloan.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Both Members of This Club George Bellows. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Both_Members_of_This_Club_George_Bellows.jpeg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Alfred Stieglitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Stieglitz. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- abstract. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/abstract. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shinn Henri Sloan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shinn_Henri_Sloan.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Both Members of This Club George Bellows. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Both_Members_of_This_Club_George_Bellows.jpeg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Adams_The_Tetons_and_the_Snake_River.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/2/21/Adams_The_Tetons_and_the_Snake_River.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- O'Keeffe-(hands). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:O'Keeffe-(hands).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Alfred Stieglitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- The Armory Show. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Armory_Show. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- American Realism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/American%20Realism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Fauvism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Fauvism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Shinn Henri Sloan. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shinn_Henri_Sloan.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Both Members of This Club George Bellows. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Both_Members_of_This_Club_George_Bellows.jpeg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Adams_The_Tetons_and_the_Snake_River.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/2/21/Adams_The_Tetons_and_the_Snake_River.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- O'Keeffe-(hands). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:O'Keeffe-(hands).jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Alfred Stieglitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Duchamp - Nude Descending a Staircase. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_-_Nude_Descending_a_Staircase.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- ArmoryShow poster. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ArmoryShow_poster.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Sloan cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sloan_cubism.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 29.3: Modernism in America is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.4: Art in the US during the 1920s and 1930s

The Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance (1920s–1930s) was an African-American cultural movement known for its proliferation in art, music, and literature.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the characteristics, themes, and contributing factors of the Harlem Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The cultural and political Harlem Renaissance produced visual art, novels, plays, poems, music, and dance that represented the flowering of a distinctive African-American expression.
- Along with the artists, political leaders such as Marcus Garvey founded potent philosophies of black self-determination and unity among black communities in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.
- Harlem became an African-American neighborhood in the early 1900s, during the Great Migration in which many African Americans sought a better standard of living and relief from the institutionalized racism in the South.
- While there was no unifying characteristic of the movement, common themes included the influence of slavery, black identity, the effects of institutional racism, and how to convey the experience of modern black life in the urban North.
- Notable visual artists of the movement include Aaron Douglas, Archibald Motley, Charles Henry Alston, and Jacob Lawrence.

Key Terms

- **Red Summer**: The race riots that occurred in more than three dozen cities in the United States during the summer and early autumn of 1919.
- **race riots**: Riots caused by racial hatred or dissension. They occurred throughout the 20th century, especially before and during the Civil Rights Movement.
- **blackface**: A style of theatrical makeup in which a white person blackens their face in order to represent a negro.

Overview

The Harlem Renaissance was a cultural movement in the United States that spanned the 1920s and 1930s. While the zenith of the movement occurred between 1924 and 1929, its ideas have lived on much longer. At the time, it was known as the New Negro Movement, named after the 1925 anthology by Alain Locke.

This cultural and political renaissance produced novels, plays, murals, poems, music, dance, and other artwork that represented the flowering of a distinctive African-American expression. Along with the artists, political leaders such as Marcus Garvey founded potent philosophies of self-determination and unity among black communities in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.

At the same time, activists like Hubert Harrison challenged the notion of the renaissance, arguing that the term was largely a white invention that overlooked the continuous stream of creativity that had emerged from the African-American community since 1850.

Harlem's Background

The district of Harlem had originally developed in the 19th century as an exclusive suburb for the white middle and upper classes. During the enormous influx of European immigrants in the late 19th century, the once exclusive district was abandoned by whites, who moved further north.

Harlem became an African-American neighborhood in the early 1900s, during the Great Migration in which many sought a better standard of living and relief from the institutionalized racism in the South. Others of African descent came from racially stratified communities in the Caribbean, seeking a better life in the U.S. By 1930, 90,000 new arrivals joined the African-Americans already living there, creating a community of nearly 200,000.

Despite the increasing popularity of black culture, virulent white racism continued to affect African-American communities. Race riots and other civil uprisings occurred throughout the U.S. during the Red Summer of 1919, reflecting economic competition over jobs, housing, and social territories.

Characteristics and Themes

What characterized the Harlem Renaissance was an overt racial pride and the developing idea of a new black identity, that through intellect and production of literature, art, and music could challenge the pervading racism and promote progressive politics.

There was no uniting form characterizing the art that emerged, however. It encompassed a wide variety of styles, including Pan-African perspectives; high culture and low culture; traditional music to blues and jazz; traditional and experimental forms in literature, such as modernism; and the new form of jazz poetry.

Some common themes represented during the Harlem Renaissance were the influence of slavery, black identity, the effects of institutional racism, the dilemmas of performing and writing for elite white audiences, and how to convey the experience of modern black life in the urban North.

New authors attracted a great amount of national attention, and the Harlem Renaissance led to more opportunities for blacks to be published by mainstream houses. Some authors who became nationally known were Jean Toomer, Jessie Fauset, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Eric D. Walrond, and Langston Hughes.

Langston Hughes: Langston Hughes was one of the most well-known writers to emerge from the Harlem Renaissance.

A new way of playing the piano called Harlem Stride was also created during the Renaissance, and jazz musicians like Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, and Willie “The Lion” Smith are considered to have laid the foundation for future musicians of their genre.

Visual artists of the time included Charles Alston, Henry Bannarn, Leslie Bolling, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, and Archibold Motley.

Black Belt (original painting in color): Archibald Motley is most famous for his colorful chronicling of the African-American experience during the 1920s and 1930s and is considered one of the major contributors to the Harlem Renaissance.

Aaron Douglas

Aaron Douglas was a notable artist of the Harlem Renaissance. After completing his BFA at the University of Nebraska in 1922, Douglas moved to New York City, settling in Harlem. Just a few months after his arrival he began to produce illustrations for both The Crisis and Opportunity, the two most important magazines associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

He also began studying with Winold Reiss, a German artist who had been hired by Alain Locke to illustrate The New Negro. Reiss' teaching helped Douglas develop the modernist style he would employ for the next decade.

Douglas' engagement with African and Egyptian design brought him to the attention of W. E. B. Du Bois and Dr. Locke, who were pressing for young African-American artists to express their African heritage and African-American folk culture in their art.

In 1926 Douglas married Alta Sawyer. They lived together in Harlem and for the next several years, opened their home to an important, powerful circle of artists and writers we now call the Harlem Renaissance.

Charles Henry Alston

Charles Henry Alston (November 28, 1907–April 27, 1977) was an African-American painter, sculptor, illustrator, muralist, and teacher who lived and worked in Harlem. Alston was the first African-American supervisor for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project.

Alston designed and painted murals at the Harlem Hospital and the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building. In 1990 Alston's bust of Martin Luther King, Jr. became the first image of an African-American displayed at the White House.

In the beginning, Charles Alston's mural work was inspired by the work of Aaron Douglas, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco, the latter who he met when they did mural work in New York. In 1943 Alston was elected to the board of directors of the National Society of Mural Painters.

He created murals for the Harlem Hospital, Golden State Mutual, American Museum of Natural History, Public School 154, the Bronx Family and Criminal Court, and the Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, New York.

Modern Medicine: Alston’s mural at the Harlem Hospital is a significant work of the Harlem Renaissance.

Jacob Lawrence

Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000) was an African-American painter known for his portrayal of African-American life. But not only was he a painter, storyteller, and interpreter, he also was an educator. Lawrence referred to his style as dynamic cubism, though by his own account the primary influence was not so much French art as the shapes and colors of Harlem.

He brought the African-American experience to life using blacks and browns juxtaposed with vivid colors. He also taught, and spent 15 years as a professor at the University of Washington.

Lawrence is among the best-known 20th-century African-American painters. He was 23 years old when he gained national recognition with his 60-panel Migration Series, painted on cardboard. The series depicted the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. A part of this series was featured in a 1941 issue of Fortune Magazine. The collection is now held by two museums.

Lawrence’s works are in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, the Phillips Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and Reynolda House Museum of American Art. He is widely known for his modernist illustrations of everyday life as well as epic narratives of African American history and historical figures.

Jacob Lawrence, Self Portrait: This painting, done in 1977, exemplifies the vivid use of color in his work.

American Regionalist Art

Regionalism refers to a naturalist and realist style of painting that dominated American rural painting in the 1930s.

Learning Objectives

Define the American painting style of Regionalism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- After World War I, many American artists rejected the modern trends emanating from the Armory Show and European influences such as those from the School of Paris. Instead they chose to adopt academic realism to depict American rural scenes.
- By the 1940s there was a strong debate among the Regionalists and the Social Realists in rural areas, whose work addressed social, economic, and political issues; and the Abstract artists in New York City who embraced Modernism.
- Using a realist approach, the artistic focus of Regionalism was to create scenes of rural life by artists who shunned city life and rapidly developing technological advances.
- Regionalist style was at its height from 1930 to 1935, and is best-known through the so-called Regionalist Triumvirate of Grant Wood in Iowa, Thomas Hart Benton in Missouri, and John Steuart Curry in Kansas.

Key Terms

- **social realism**: An artistic movement, expressed in the visual and other realist arts that depicts social injustice and economic hardship through unvarnished pictures of life's struggles that often depict working-class activities as heroic.
- **School of Paris**: A school of art that represented the importance of Paris as a center of Western art in the early decades of the 20th century, and where a group of artists including Picasso, Chagall, Mondrian, and Matisse created in the styles of Post-Impressionism, Cubism, and Fauvism.
- **Armory show**: The 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art that was organized by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors. The exhibition ran in New York City's 69th Regiment Armory from February 17 until March 15, and became an important event in the history of American art, introducing New Yorkers to modern art.

Overview of American Regionalism

Regionalism, also known as American scene painting, refers to a naturalist style of painting that was prevalent during the 1920s through the 1950s in the United States. After World War I, many American artists rejected the modern trends that emanated from the Armory Show and European influences, choosing instead to adopt an academic realism to depict American rural scenes.

Partly due to the Great Depression, Regionalism became one of the dominant art movements in America in the 1930s (the other being Social Realism). At the time, the United States was still a heavily agricultural nation with a much smaller portion of its population living in industrial cities such as New York City or Chicago.

A debate between abstraction versus realism had been ongoing since the 1913 Armory Show, and this continued throughout the 1930s among Regionalism, Social Realism, and Abstract art. By the 1940s this debate evolved into two camps that were divided geographically and politically:

1. The Regionalists and the Social Realists who primarily lived in rural areas and whose work addressed social, economic, and political issues.
2. The Abstract artists who primarily lived in New York City and embraced Modernism.

Regionalism's eventual loss of status in the art world is mainly a result of the ultimate triumph of Abstract expressionism, when Modernist critics gained power in the 1940s.

The Regionalists and the Social Realists

Using a realist approach, Regionalist artists shunned city life and its rapidly developing technological advances to create scenes of rural life. In Grant Wood's pamphlet Revolt Against the City, published in Iowa City in 1935, he asserts that American artists and buyers of art were no longer looking to Parisian culture for subject matter and style.

Wood wrote that Regional artists interpret the physiography, industry, and psychology of their hometown, and that the competition of these preceding elements creates American culture. He wrote that the lure of the city was gone, and hoped that art of the widely diffused "whole people" would prevail.

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere: This painting by Grant Wood, done in 1931, exemplifies a typical Regionalist depiction of small-town America.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Regionalist art was widely appreciated for its reassuring images of the American heartland. Much of the work conveyed a sense of nationalism and romanticism in depictions of everyday American life.

During the 1930s, these artists documented and depicted American small towns and rural landscapes, as well as cities; the works which stress local and small-town themes are often called American Regionalism, and those depicting urban scenes, with political and social consciousness, are called Social Realism.

Some artists depicted images as a way to return to a simpler time away from industrialization, whereas others sought to make a political statement and lent their art to revolutionary and radical causes.

Cut the Line: This 1944 artwork by Thomas Hart Benton shows the launch of a Tank Landing Ship (LST). Benton is considered by many art critics to be the quintessential American artist of the 20th Century, and during World War II was commissioned by Abbott Laboratories to produce artworks about the Navy.

Regionalist style was at its height from 1930 to 1935, and is best-known through the so-called Regionalist Triumvirate of Grant Wood in Iowa, Thomas Hart Benton in Missouri, and John Steuart Curry in Kansas.

Other artists of the movement include John Rogers Cox, Alexandre Hogue, Dale Nichols, and William S. Schwartz. Many artists involved in the movement studied with or under Benton at the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI), such as John Stockton de Martelly, Frederic James, and Pat Potucek.

American Gothic: Grant Wood's best-known work is this 1930 painting, which is also one of the most famous paintings in American art, and one of the few images to reach the status of universally recognized cultural icon, comparable to Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa and Edvard Munch's The Scream.

Photography during the Great Depression

During the 1930s and 1940s, photography evolved in terms of its technical possibilities as well as its function as an art form.

Learning Objectives

Describe the evolution of photography from 1930–1945

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In 1935–1936 both Kodak and Agfa introduced new color film technologies that allowed for the proliferation of color photography for the first time.
- Social realism extended to photography, and depicted social injustice and economic hardship through unvarnished pictures of life's struggles. Working-class activities were often depicted as heroic.
- Group f/64, led by Ansel Adams, was a group of seven San Francisco photographers who shared a common photographic style characterized by sharp-focused and carefully framed images seen through a particularly Western viewpoint.
- The FSA funded a number of photographers to document the realities of the Depression and who created the iconic images that we still see today.

Key Terms

- **Harlem Renaissance**: An African-American cultural movement that spanned the 1920s and 1930s and is characterized by a proliferation of music, literature, poetry and dance.
- **pictorialism**: A school of artistic photography that emphasized using photography to mimic certain styles of contemporary painting, and flourished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Images were typically characterized by a soft focus and color or brushstroke manipulation.
- **Great Depression**: A major economic collapse that lasted from 1929 to 1940 in the United States.

Overview

The period from 1930–1945 in American history is marked by the Great Depression and the outbreak of the second World War. During this time, both photography and sculpture expanded into new realms of artistic expression, heavily influenced by the society and times.

Photography

Photographic technology continued to expand throughout the 20th century. Kodachrome, the first modern integral tripack (or monopack) color film, was introduced by Kodak in 1935, and Agfa's similarly structured Agfacolor Neu was introduced in 1936. These new technologies allowed for the proliferation of color photography for the first time, and currently available color films still employ a multilayer emulsion and the same principles, most closely resembling Agfa's product.

Social Realism

Social realism, also known as socio-realism, became an important art movement during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Social realism depicted social and racial injustice, and economic hardship through unvarnished pictures of life's struggles, and often portrayed working-class activities as heroic.

The movement was largely a style of painting that typically conveyed a message of social or political protest edged with satire; however, it also extended to the art of photography. Prominent photographers at the time included Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Margaret Bourke-White, Lewis Hine, Edward Steichen, Gordon Parks, Arthur Rothstein, Marion Post Wolcott, Doris Ulmann, Berenice Abbott, Aaron Siskind, and Russell Lee, among several others.

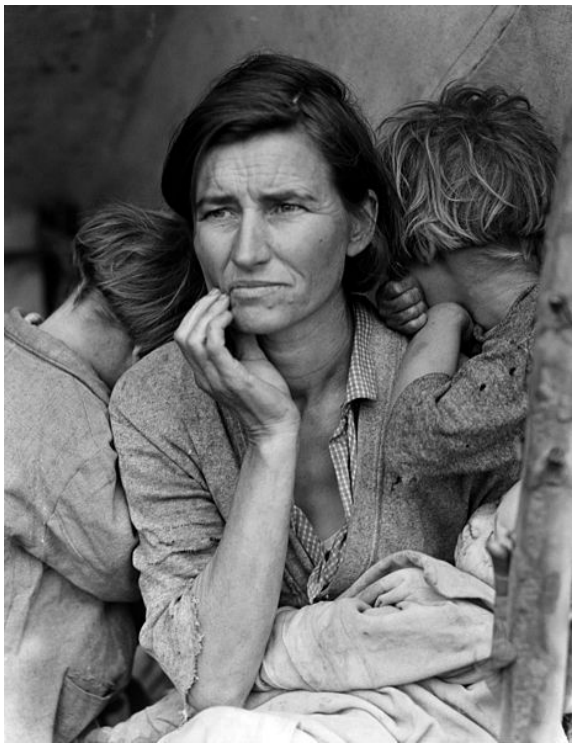
Each of these artists sought to depict the world–and often the poverty–they saw around them with the realistic portrayal that only photography could provide.

The FSA

The Farm Security Administration, part of the New Deal, was an effort during the Depression to combat American rural poverty. The majority of the program was directed towards rural rehabilitation, but it is also known for funding the work of a number of photographers.

From 1935–1944, the Farm Security Administration employed several photographers to document the effects of the Great Depression on the population of America. The Information Division of the FSA was responsible for providing educational materials and press information to the public.

Under Roy Stryker, the Information Division of the FSA adopted a goal of “introducing America to Americans.” Many of the most famous Depression-era photographers, such as Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks, were fostered by the FSA project.



Migrant Mother: The caption of the image reads: “Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California.” Lange’s image of a supposed migrant pea picker, Florence Owens Thompson, and her family has become an icon of resilience in the face of adversity.

Group F/64

Alongside social realism, another approach to photography, referred to as straight photography, was also gaining momentum. Group f/64 is perhaps the most well-known example of this art movement.

Group f/64 was a group of seven, 20th-century San Francisco photographers who shared a common photographic style characterized by sharp-focused and carefully framed images seen through a particularly Western viewpoint. In part, they formed in opposition to the pictorialism movement in photography that had dominated much of the early 20th century, but moreover they wanted to promote a new modernist aesthetic that was based on precisely exposed images of natural forms and found objects.

Photographers involved in the group included Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, John Paul Edwards, Sonya Noskowiak, Henry Swift, Willard Van Dyke, and Edward Weston.

Yosemite Trees with Snow on Branches, by Ansel Adams: Ansel Adams was one of the co-founders of Group f/64, a group of photographers known who shared a common style characterized by sharp-focused and carefully framed images.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 29.4: Art in the US during the 1920s and 1930s is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.5: Modern Architecture

European Expressionist Architecture

Expressionist architecture was a European movement of the twentieth century that came about in parallel with the Expressionist visual and performing arts.

Learning Objectives

Describe some common stylistic elements found in European Expressionist architecture in the early 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The term Expressionist architecture initially described the activity of the German, Dutch, Austrian, Czech, and Danish avant-garde from 1910 until 1930.
- The style was characterized by an early modernist adoption of novel materials, formal innovation, and very unusual massing—sometimes inspired by natural biomorphic forms and sometimes by the new technical possibilities offered by the mass production of brick, steel, and glass.
- Expressionist architecture was individualistic and in many ways eschewed aesthetic dogma, but some aims common to its proponents include: the distortion of form, a striving for the new, the notion of architecture as a work of art, and the aim to express an inner experience

Key Terms

- **Expressionist architecture**: An architectural movement that developed in Europe during the first decades of the 20th century in parallel with the expressionist visual and performing arts.

Modern European Architecture

Expressionist architecture was an architectural movement that developed in Europe during the first decades of the twentieth century in parallel with the expressionist visual and performing arts. The term Expressionist architecture initially described the activity of the German, Dutch, Austrian, Czech, and Danish avant-garde from 1910 until 1930.

Subsequent redefinitions extended the term backwards to 1905 and also widened it to encompass the rest of Europe. Today the meaning has broadened even further to refer to architecture of any date or location that exhibits some of the qualities of the original movement such as: distortion, fragmentation, or the communication of violent or overstressed emotion.

Expressionism

The style was characterized by an early modernist adoption of novel materials, formal innovation, and very unusual massing—sometimes inspired by natural biomorphic forms and sometimes by the new technical possibilities offered by the mass production of brick, steel, and glass.

Many expressionist architects fought in World War I and their experiences, combined with the political turmoil and social upheaval that followed the German Revolution of 1919, resulted in a Utopian outlook and a romantic socialist agenda. Hence, ephemeral exhibition buildings were numerous and highly significant during this period.

Likewise, scenography for theater and films provided another outlet for the expressionist imagination, and provided supplemental incomes for designers attempting to challenge conventions in a harsh economic climate.

Features of Expressionist Architecture

Expressionist architecture was individualistic and in many ways eschewed aesthetic dogma. While the movement was very broad, some points can be found as recurring in works of Expressionist architecture, and are evident in some degree in each of its works.

- A distortion of form for an emotional effect.
- The subordination of realism to symbolic or stylistic expression of inner experience.

- An underlying effort at achieving the new, original, and visionary.
- A profusion of works on paper, and models, with discovery and representations of concepts being more important than pragmatic finished products.
- Often hybrid solutions, irreducible to a single concept.
- Themes of natural romantic phenomena, such as caves, mountains, lightning, crystal and rock formations.
- Utilizes the creative potential of artisan craftsmanship.
- A tendency towards the gothic than the classical.
- Draws as much from Moorish, Islamic, Egyptian, and Indian art and architecture as from Roman or Greek.
- Conceives architecture as a work of art.

Form also played a defining role in setting apart expressionist architecture from its immediate predecessor, art nouveau, or Jugendstil. While art nouveau had an organic freedom with ornament, expressionist architecture strove to free the form of the whole building instead of just its parts.

An example of a built expressionist project that is formally inventive is Erich Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower. This sculpted building shows a relativistic and shifting view of geometry: devoid of applied ornament, form and space are shaped in fluid concrete to express concepts of the architect and the building's namesake.

The Einstein Tower: In Mendelsohn's design, form and space are shaped in fluid concrete and devoid of applied ornament.

Expressionist architecture utilized curved geometries and a recurring form in the movement is the dome. Another expressionist motif was the emphasis on either horizontality or verticality for dramatic effect, which was influenced by new technologies like cruise liners and skyscrapers.

Skyscraper Project: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper Project, Berlin-Mitte, Germany, 1921.

American Art Deco Architecture

Art Deco and Streamline Moderne were two key styles of early 20th-century American architecture.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish between Art Deco and Streamline Moderne in American architecture in the first half of the 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Art Deco emerged from the Interwar period and combines traditional craft motifs with Machine-Age imagery and materials.
- Art Deco can be recognized by its heavy ornament, bold geometric forms, and rich colors.
- Streamline Moderne was an aesthetic first created by industrial designers who stripped Art Deco design of its ornament in favor of the aerodynamic pure- line concept of motion and speed developed from scientific thinking: it is embodied in cylindrical forms and long, horizontal windowing.
- The Streamline Moderne was both a reaction to Art Deco and a reflection of austere economic times. Gone was unnecessary ornament: sharp angles were replaced with simple, aerodynamic curves.

Key Terms

- **Streamline Moderne**: Sometimes referred to as Art Moderne, a late type of the Art Deco design style that emerged during the 1930s. Its architectural style emphasized curving forms, long, horizontal lines, and sometimes nautical elements.
- **Art Deco**: A style of decorative art and architecture originating in the 1920s and 1930s, characterized by bold geometric forms and simple composition.

Overview

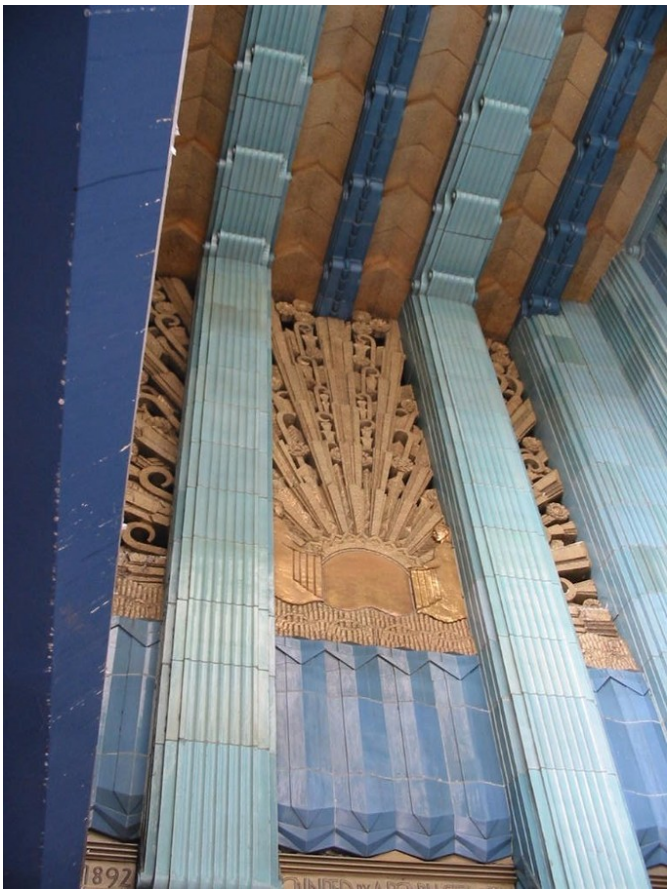
Modern American architecture is usually divided into the two styles of Art Deco and Streamline Moderne. Art Deco, which emerged in the 1920s and flourished in the 1930s to 1940s, is an eclectic style that combines traditional craft motifs with Machine Age imagery and materials.

Streamline Moderne, also known as Art Moderne, was a late type of the Art Deco design style that emerged during the 1930s. Its architectural style emphasized curving forms, long, horizontal lines, and sometimes nautical elements.

Art Deco

The Art Deco style is often characterized by its use of rich colors, symmetry, bold geometric shapes, simple composition, rectilinear rather than curvilinear shapes, and lavish ornamentation. Emerging during the Interwar period when rapid industrialization was transforming culture, one of the major attributes of Art Deco was its embrace of technology.

During its heyday, Art Deco represented luxury, glamor, exuberance, and faith in social and technological progress. The urban United States has many examples of Art Deco architecture, especially in New York, Chicago, and Detroit. The famous skyscrapers in these cities are the best known, but notable Art Deco buildings can be found in other neighborhoods.



Eastern Columbia Building entrance, Los Angeles, 1930: The sunburst design executed in terra cotta exemplifies Art Deco's characteristic combination of craft, ornament, and geometrical motif.

Spire of the Chrysler Building, New York: The opulent Art Deco spire of the Chrysler Building in New York City, designed by William Van Alen, was built 1928–1930 and reflects the earlier lavish ornamentation, yet simple and streamlined composition of the style.

Streamline Moderne

As the Great Depression decade of the 1930s progressed, Americans saw a new decorative element of the Art Deco style emerge in the marketplace: streamlining. Streamline Moderne was a concept first created by industrial designers, who stripped Art Deco design of its ornament in favor of the aerodynamic pure-line concept of motion and speed developed from scientific thinking.

This aesthetic was embodied through the use of cylindrical forms and long, horizontal windowing. An array of designers quickly ultra-modernized and streamlined the designs of everyday objects, such as toasters.

Streamline Moderne was both a reaction to Art Deco and a reflection of austere economic times. Gone was unnecessary ornament. Sharp angles were replaced with simple, aerodynamic curves. Exotic woods and stone were replaced with cement and glass.

Some common characteristics of Streamline Moderne include horizontal orientation, rounded edges, corner windows, glass blocks, porthole windows, chrome hardware, smooth exterior wall surfaces (usually stucco), horizontal wall grooves, and subdued colors.

Hecht Company Warehouse: The Hecht Company Warehouse (Washington, D.C.) is a Streamline Moderne style building. The building uses glass block extensively, culminating in a twelve-pointed star-shaped cupola at the corner, which is illuminated at night. Black brick interspersed with glass block spells out The Hecht Co. at the fifth floor.

Hollywood Palladium: The Hollywood Palladium (in Hollywood, CA) was a dance hall built in the 1940s in the Streamline Moderne style. This picture depicts the Palladium in 2005, prior to its 2008 renovation.

However, Art Deco and Streamline Moderne were not necessarily opposites. Streamline Moderne buildings with a few Deco elements were not uncommon, and sometimes there is so much crossover that it can be difficult to differentiate between the two styles.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Expressionist architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionist_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Expressionist Architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionist%20Architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Friedrichstrasse Mies. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrichstrasse_Mies.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Babelsberg Einsteinturm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Babelsberg_Einsteinturm.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Chrysler Building. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Chrysler_Building#Design_beginnings. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- American architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/American_architecture%23Style_Moderne_and_the_Interwar_skyscraper. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Streamline Moderne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Streamline_Moderne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art Deco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Deco%23United_States. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art Deco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Deco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art Deco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Art%20Deco. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Streamline Moderne. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Streamline%20Moderne. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Friedrichstrasse Mies. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrichstrasse_Mies.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Babelsberg Einsteinturm. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Babelsberg_Einsteinturm.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Hecht warehouse washington dc. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hecht_warehouse_washington_dc.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Eastern Columbia Building entrance.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/6/62/Eastern_Columbia_Building_entrance.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Hollywood Palladium. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hollywood_Palladium.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Chrysler Building spire, Manhattan, by Carol Highsmith (LOC highsm.04444). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chrysler_Building_spire,_Manhattan,_by_Carol_Highsmith_(LOC_highsm.04444).png. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 29.5: Modern Architecture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.6: Canadian Painting

Canadian Painting in the 20th Century

The Group of Seven and the Eastern Group of Painters are two important Canadian painting collectives founded in the early 20th century.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the role and focus of the Group of Seven from that of the Eastern Group of Painters in Canada

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- A group of landscape painters called the Group of Seven aimed to develop the first distinctly Canadian style of painting; they painted large, brilliantly colored scenes of the Canadian wilderness. They later enlarged to form the Canadian Group of Painters.
- By the 1920s and 1930s, artists such as Kathleen Munn, Bertram Brooker, and Lawren Harris began experimenting with abstract or non-objective art, viewing abstract art as a way to explore symbolism and mysticism.
- Founded in 1938 in Montréal, the Eastern Group of Painters included Montréal artists whose common interest was painting art for art's sake, rather than for the espousal of a nationalist theory like the Group of Seven.
- Artists such as Emily Carr, David Milne, and William Kurelek took on a highly individual style, and many painted in a similar style to that of American regionalism.

Key Terms

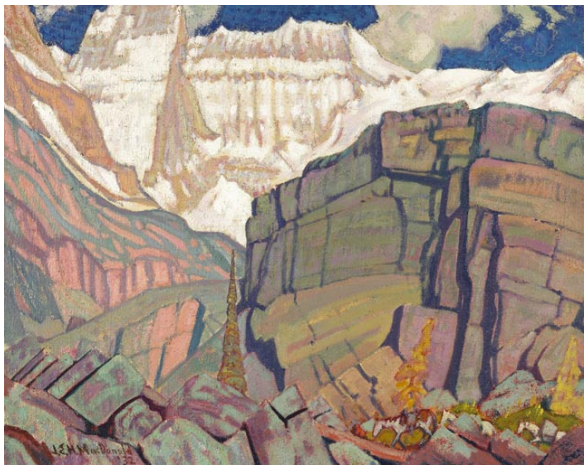
- **Regionalism**: An American realist modern art movement that was popular during the 1930s. The artistic focus was to create scenes of rural life by artists who shunned city life and rapidly developing technological advances.
- **oeuvre**: The complete body of an artist's work.

The Group of Seven

The Group of Seven was a group of Canadian landscape painters known for their large, brilliantly colored scenes of the Canadian wilderness. Believing that a distinct Canadian art could be developed through direct contact with nature, the Group of Seven initiated the first major Canadian national art movement.

The original members of the group were Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J. E. H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley. Tom Thomson (who died in 1917) and Emily Carr were also closely associated with the Group of Seven, though neither were ever official members.

In the 1930s, members of the Group of Seven decided to enlarge the club and formed the Canadian Group of Painters, made up of 28 artists from across the country.



Mount Lefroy: James MacDonald was one of the founding members of Canada's Group of Seven, considered by many to be the first uniquely Canadian artistic group and style of painting.

The Group of Seven: The Group of Seven aimed to develop the first distinctly Canadian style of painting. This image shows six of the Group of Seven, plus their friend Barker Fairley, sitting at a table in 1920. From left to right: Frederick Varley, A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Fairley, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, and J. E. H. MacDonald.

The Eastern Group of Painters

Founded in 1938 in Montreal, Quebec, the Eastern Group of Painters included Montreal artists whose common interest was painting as a means to create art for art's sake, as opposed to the espousal of a nationalist theory (which was the case with the Group of Seven).

By the late 1930s, many Canadian artists began resenting the quasi-national institution that the Group of Seven had become. Artists began rejecting the perspective that the efforts of a group of Ontario-based artists constituted a national vision or oeuvre, and many artists—notably those in Quebec—began feeling ignored and undermined.

The Eastern Group of Painters formed to counter this notion and to restore variation of purpose, method, and geography to Canadian art. The group's members included Alexander Bercovitch, Goodridge Roberts, Eric Goldberg, Jack Weldon Humphrey, John Goodwin Lyman, and Jori Smith.

Non-Objective Art

In the 1920s, Kathleen Munn and Bertram Brooker independently experimented with abstract or non-objective art in Canada. Both artists viewed abstract art as a way to explore symbolism and mysticism as an integrated part of their personal spirituality.

As the Group of Seven was enlarged into the Canadian group of Painters in the 1930s, Lawren Harris left the group to also experiment with abstract forms and aimed to represent broad conceptual themes rather than landscapes. These individual artists indirectly influenced the following generation of artists who would come to form groups dedicated to abstract art after World War II.

1930s Regionalism

Since the 1930s, Canadian painters have developed a wide range of highly individual styles. Emily Carr became famous for her paintings of totem poles, native villages, and the forests of British Columbia. Other noted painters include the landscape artist David Milne and the prairie painter William Kurelek, who painted in a similar style to that of American regionalism.

Blunden Harbor: Emily Carr became famous for her paintings of totem poles, native villages, and the forests of British Columbia in the early 20th century.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Canadian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Canadian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Canadian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Regionalism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Regionalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- oeuvre. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/oeuvre. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Group-of-seven-artists. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Group-of-seven-artists.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Blunden harbour totems Emily Carr. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blunden_harbour_totems_Emily_Carr.jpeg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Mount Lefroy - James MacDonald. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mount_Lefroy_-_James_MacDonald.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 29.6: Canadian Painting is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.7: The Mexican Renaissance

Mexican Muralism

Mexican muralism can be defined as the mural painting that was used to promote nationalistic ideals as part of efforts to reunify the country under the post-Mexican Revolution government.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the works of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Siqueiros.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- At the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1921, the government commissioned the painting of public murals as a way of promoting the ideals of the Revolution to a largely illiterate public.
- The murals were meant to glorify the Mexican Revolution, promote the identity of Mexico as a mestizo nation—celebrating both indigenous and Spanish backgrounds—and to promote art as a public commodity, not only the province of a few wealthy collectors.
- While Mexican Muralism was intended to promote the ideals of a new post revolution government, the artists were given complete freedom, so the imagery and themes that were depicted varied from artist to artist.
- Common imagery in these murals include depictions of the revolution (both positive and negative), a technological and scientific future (Sequeiros in particular), scenes of everyday life and ancient Mexico (Rivera), the horrors of the war (Orozco), and a fear of technology (Orozco).
- Many of the muralists included elements of Marxism, highlighting the struggle of the working class against oppression.
- The three most influential muralists from the 20th century were Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Siqueiros; they are known as los tres grandes.
- The concept of murals to promote political messages carried over to the United States, and served as inspiration to the later Chicano Mural Movement.

Key Terms

- **mestizo**: A person of mixed ancestry, especially one of Spanish and Native American heritage.
- **Mexican Revolution**: A major armed struggle that started in 1910, with an uprising led by Francisco I. Madero against longtime autocrat Porfirio Diaz, and lasted for the better part of a decade until around 1920. Over time the Revolution changed from a revolt against the established order to a multisided civil war.

Mexican Muralism

The era from 1930–1945 in Mexico is best marked by Mexican muralism. From the 1920s to 1970s a large number of murals with nationalistic, social, and political messages were created on public buildings, as part of efforts to reunify the country under the post-Mexican Revolution government. Mexican muralism started a tradition that continues to this day in Mexico.

In 1921, after the end of the Mexican Revolution, José Vasconcelos was appointed to head the Secretaría de Educación Pública. At the time, most of the Mexican population was illiterate and the government needed a way to promote the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. Vasconcelos helped establish a government-backed mural program, hiring the country's best artists, for this purpose.

Similar to mural use in the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods, the purpose of these murals were not simply aesthetic, but social, to promote certain ideals. These ideals or principles were to glorify the Mexican Revolution and the identity of Mexico as a mestizo nation, with the indigenous promoted as well as the Spanish.

The movement was strongest from the 1920s to the 1950s, which corresponded to the country's transformation from a mostly rural and mostly illiterate society to an industrialized one. While today they are part of Mexico's identity, at the time they were controversial, especially those with socialist messages plastered on centuries-old colonial buildings.

One of the basic underpinnings of the nascence of a post-revolutionary Mexican art was that it should be public, available to the citizenry, and above all not the province of a few wealthy collectors. The great societal upheaval, as well as a lack of relatively wealthy middle class to support the arts, made the concept possible, and on this the painters and the government agreed.

Though commissioned by the government, the artists maintained complete freedom of expression; in addition to the original ideas of a reconstructed Mexico and the elevation of Mexico's indigenous and rural identity, many of the muralists included elements of Marxism—especially the struggle of the working class against oppression.

The murals, due to their locations and themes, took on a monumental status. Many were painted on the walls of colonial-era government buildings. Techniques included the revival of old techniques such as the fresco—painting on freshly plastered walls—and encaustic or hot wax painting. Others used mosaics and high-fire ceramics, as well as metal parts, and layers of cement.

Los Tres Grandes

The three most influential muralists from the 20th century are Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Siqueiros, often referred to as los tres grandes (the three great ones). They believed that art was the highest form of human expression and a key force in social revolution.

Their work defined the movement and created a mythology around the Mexican Revolution and the Mexican people, and promoted Marxist ideals, which are still influential to this day. At the time the works were painted, they also served as a form of catharsis over what the country had endured during the war.

However, the three were quite different in their artistic expression. Rivera's works were utopian and idealist, Orozco's were critical and pessimistic, and the most radical were those of Siqueiros, which focused heavily on a scientific future.

The differences among the three have much to do with how each experienced the Mexican Revolution. Rivera was in Europe the entire time and did not fight. He never depicted the horrors of the war but what he perceived to be the social benefits from it. The other two did fight, and both expressed the horrors of war in their work.

Diego Rivera

Of the three artists, Rivera was the most traditional in terms of painting styles, and he drew heavily from European modernism. His themes were Mexican, often scenes of everyday life and images of ancient Mexico. He originally painted this in bright colors in the European style, but modified it to more earthy tones to imitate indigenous murals. His greatest contribution is the promotion of Mexico's indigenous past.

Mural in the main stairwell of the National Palace by Diego Rivera: A leader in Mexican muralism, much of Rivera's work was utopian and idealist.

Jose Clemente Orozco

Orozco also began with a European style of expression. However, his art developed into an angry denunciation of oppression especially by those he considered to be an evil and brutal ruling class. His work was somber and dire, with an emphasis on human suffering and a fear of the technology of the future.

Unlike other artists, Orozco never glorified the Mexican Revolution, having fought in it, but rather depicted the horrors of this war. This caused many of his murals to be heavily criticized and even defaced.

La gran legislación revolucionaria mexicana y la abolición de la esclavitud: Orozco, one of the three great muralists of the 20th century, painted murals that were more critical and pessimistic that his peers.

David Alfaro Siqueiros

Siqueiros was the youngest and most radical of the three, having joined the Venustiano Carranza army when he was 18 and who experienced the Revolution from the front lines. Although all three were communists, Siqueiros was the most dedicated, with his painting filled with portrayals of the proletarian masses.

His work is also characterized with rapid, sweeping, bold lines and the use of modern enamels, machinery, and other elements related to technology. His radical politics made him unwelcome in Mexico and the United States, so he did much of his work in South America. His masterpiece is considered to be the Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros, located in Mexico City.

Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros: Siquieros is known for his radical politics and murals, characterized by rapid, sweeping, bold lines. The Polyform Cultural Siqueiros is considered his masterpiece.

Mexican muralism brought mural painting back to the forefront of Western art in the 20th century, and its influence spread abroad, especially to promote the idea of mural painting as a form to further social and political ideas. The concept of a mural as a political

message was transplanted to the United States, especially in the former Mexican territory of the Southwest, and served as inspiration to the later Chicano Mural Movement.

Mexican Painting: Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo, a Mexican painter known especially for her self-portraits, has been celebrated internationally as emblematic of Mexican national and indigenous traditions, and by feminists for her uncompromising depiction of the female experience and form.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the work of Frida Kahlo

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Marked by physical affliction due to a serious bus accident when she was 18, Kahlo spent a great deal of time in isolation, which is reflected in her work.
- Frida Kahlo's work has variously been described as surrealist art, folk art, and naive art, none of which were satisfactory to the artist herself.
- Of her 140 paintings, 55 are self-portraits that often incorporate symbolic portrayals of physical and psychological wounds.
- Because of her experiences with infertility, many of her paintings reference reproductive failure.
- Frida Kahlo was influenced by indigenous Mexican culture which is apparent in her use of bright colors, dramatic symbolism, and primitive style.
- Kahlo's work was not widely acclaimed until decades after her death.

Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo de Rivera (July 6, 1907–July 13, 1954), born Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderón, was a Mexican painter known especially for her self-portraits. Her work has been celebrated internationally as emblematic of Mexican national and indigenous traditions, and by feminists for its uncompromising depiction of the female experience and form.

Kahlo's life began and ended in Mexico City, in the home she was born in, known as La Casa Azul (the Blue House). Marked by physical affliction due to a serious bus accident when she was 18, Kahlo spent a great deal of time recovering from her injuries in an isolated space, and it is here that she completed many of her works. Kahlo said "I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best."

Frida Kahlo: Kahlo photographed by her father in 1926.

Paintings

Frida Kahlo's work has variously been described as surrealist art, folk art, and naive art, none of which were satisfactory to the artist herself. In 1938 André Breton, the principal initiator of the surrealist movement, described Kahlo's art as a "ribbon around a bomb." Frida rejected the surrealist label imposed by Breton, and argued that her work reflected more of her reality than her dreams.

Frida Kahlo is known to have created at least 140 paintings, along with dozens of drawings and studies. Of her paintings, 55 are self-portraits that often incorporate symbolic portrayals of physical and psychological wounds.

Kahlo's accident made it impossible for her to have her own children, resulting in several miscarriages throughout her life. Because of her experiences with infertility, many of her paintings reference reproductive failure. She painted Henry Ford Hospital right after her miscarriage in 1932. In this work, Frida depicts herself on a bed bleeding, with the cold and industrial feeling from being far from home in Detroit, shown behind her. She chose to paint on a sheet of metal.

The Suicide of Dorothy Hale: The legend translated: "In the city of New York on the twenty-first day of the month in October, 1938, at six o'clock in the morning, Mrs. Dorothy Hale committed suicide by throwing herself out of a very high window of the Hampshire House building. In her memory Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce commissioned this retablo, executed by Frida Kahlo."

Influences

Frida Kahlo was influenced by indigenous Mexican culture, which is apparent in her use of bright colors, dramatic symbolism and primitive style. She frequently included the monkey as a symbol in her work, which in Mexican mythology is a symbol of lust.

She often combined elements of the classic religious Mexican tradition with iconography that appears to be from a surrealist tendency. Frida Kahlo had a notoriously volatile marriage with the famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera. The couple likely influenced each other's work through the years.

Artistic Legacy

In 1938, Kahlo had her only solo gallery showing in the United States at the Julien Levy Gallery. The works were well received and several prominent artists attended the event.

At the invitation of André Breton, she went to France during 1939 and was featured at an exhibition of her paintings in Paris. The Louvre bought one of her paintings on display, The Frame. It was the first work of a twentieth-century Mexican artist that the Louvre purchased. Kahlo made the acquaintance of Wolfgang Paalen and Alice Rahon, whom she invited to come to Mexico.

Aside from the 1939 acquisition by the Louvre and a 1946 $1,000 award from the Mexican Government for her painting, Kahlo's work was not widely acclaimed until decades after her death. Often she was remembered only as Diego Rivera's wife. It was not until the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, with the beginning of Neomexicanismo, that she became well known to the public.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Social Realism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Realism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mexican muralism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_muralism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- mestizo. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mestizo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Mexican Revolution. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican%20Revolution. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- La aboliciu00f3n de la esclavitud de Orozco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:La_abolici%C3%B3n_de_la_esclavitud_de_Orozco.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- RiveraMuralNationalPalace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RiveraMuralNationalPalace.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- PolyforumSiqueiros06. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PolyforumSiqueiros06.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dorothy Hale. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Hale#Frida_Kahlo_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frida Kahlo. **Provided by**: Wikipiedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frida_Kahlo. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- La aboliciu00f3n de la esclavitud de Orozco. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:La_abolici%C3%B3n_de_la_esclavitud_de_Orozco.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- RiveraMuralNationalPalace. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RiveraMuralNationalPalace.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- PolyforumSiqueiros06. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PolyforumSiqueiros06.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 220px-Suicide_of_Dorothy_Hale.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frida_Kahlo#/media/File:Suicide_of_Dorothy_Hale.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Frida_Kahlo,_by_Guillermo_Kahlo_2.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Frida_Kahlo#/media/File:Frida_Kahlo,_by_Guillermo_Kahlo_2.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 29.7: The Mexican Renaissance is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.8: Art in Brazil

Brazil

The beginning of the 20th century saw a struggle between old schools and modernist trends in Brazilian art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of the Week of Modern Art festival in Brazil in ushering in a modern art movement

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Week of Modern Art festival, held in São Paulo in 1922, was a landmark in the history of Brazilian modern art and received fiery criticism from conservatives in society.
- The Week introduced experimental tendencies derived from European Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism to a wider public audience.
- The radicalism of those first Modernists couldn't last for long in a society used to traditional fashions, and in the 1930s Brazilian art became a mix of important achievements of the Moderns with more conventional traits, giving birth to a generation of moderate Modernism.

Key Terms

- **Surrealism**: An artistic movement and an aesthetic philosophy that aims for the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative powers of the subconscious.
- **Cubism**: An early 20th century avant-garde art movement pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, where objects are analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstracted form.

The Week of Modern Art

The beginning of the 20th century saw a struggle between old schools and modernist trends in Brazilian art. The Week of Modern Art festival, held in São Paulo in 1922, was received with fiery criticism by conservative sectors of the society, but it was a landmark in the history of Brazilian art.

The festival included plastic arts exhibitions, lectures, concerts, and readings. Due to the radicalism (for the times) of some of the poems and music, the artists were vigorously booed and pelted by the audience, and the press and art critics in general were strong in their condemnation. However, those artists are now seen as the founders of Modern art in Brazil.

During the Week of Modern Art festival, modernist literature and art theory were represented by Oswald de Andrade, Sérgio Milliet, Menotti del Picchia, and Mário de Andrade, whose revolutionary novel Macunaíma (1928) is one of the founding texts of Brazilian Modernism.

Painting was represented by Anita Malfatti, Tarsila do Amaral, Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Vicente do Rego Monteiro; sculpture by Victor Brecheret; and music by Heitor Villa-Lobos, the leader of a new musical nationalism, among many others.

Folklore's Influence

The Week of Modern Art festival not only introduced experimental tendencies derived from European Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism to a wider public audience, but also made the use of national folklore as a basis for an art more relevant to the Brazilian reality, with an enhanced social awareness.

However, the radicalism of those first Modernists couldn't last for long in a society used to traditional fashions, and the original core members separated to pursue individual paths by 1929. What Brazilian art then became was a mix of some important achievements of the Moderns, meaning freedom from the strict academic agenda, with more conventional traits, giving birth in the following generation to a moderate Modernism.

This new era of moderate Modernism was best exemplified by painter Cândido Portinari, who became something like the official painter of the Brazilian government in mid-century.

Study for the Discovery of the Land mural at the United States Library of Congress: Cândido Portinari was a prominent painter during the moderate Modernist era of the 1930s.

Brazilian Literature and Other Arts

The erosion of radical Modernism in the visual arts in the early 20th century was not reflected in Brazilian literature. Clarice Lispector wrote existentialist novels and developed a highly personal style, filled with stream-of-consciousness and epiphanies. João Guimarães Rosa changed the face of Brazilian literature with his experimental language, and the playwright Nelson Rodrigues dealt with crime, prejudice, passion, and sexual pathologies.

In the 1950s, painting and sculpture regained strength through Abstractionism, and architecture began also to display advanced features, influenced by Le Corbusier. Its greatest achievement was the urban core of Brasília, designed by urbanist Lúcio Costa and architect Oscar Niemeyer, now a World Heritage Site.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Brazilian art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazilian_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Surrealism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Surrealism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Discovery of the Land1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Discovery_of_the_Land1.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 29.8: Art in Brazil is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.9: Cuban Art

Cuba

Cuban artists embraced European modernism and the early part of the 20th century saw growth in the Cuban Vanguardism movements.

Learning Objectives

Define the Vanguadria, Modern Primitivism, and Naïve styles of Cuban art in the early 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Cuban art is a very diverse cultural blend of African, European, and North American design that reflects the diverse demographics of the island.
- In the late 1920s, Modernism burst on the Cuban scene as part of the critical movement of national regeneration, which arose in opposition to American neo-colonial control, the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado, and the consequent economic crisis.
- The Vanguardia artists, who studied surrealism, cubism, and modernist primitivism in Paris, rejected the academic conventions of Cuba's national art academy and became increasingly political in their ideology.
- Pioneers included Antonio Gattorno, Eduardo Abela, Fidelio Ponce de León, and Carlos Enríquez Gómez.
- Also influential to Cuban art was naïve art, recognized by its childlike freshness and amateurish qualities.

Key Terms

- **cubism**: An artistic movement in the early 20th century characterized by the depiction of natural forms as geometric structures of planes.
- **neo-colonial**: The geopolitical practice of using capitalism, business globalization, and cultural imperialism to control another country.
- **surrealism**: An artistic movement and an aesthetic philosophy that predates abstract expressionism, and aims for the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative powers of the subconscious.
- **primitivism**: A Western art movement that borrows visual forms from non-Western or prehistoric peoples, a practice which was central to the development of modern art.

Cuban Art

Cuban art is a very diverse cultural blend of African, European, and North American aesthetic influences that reflect the island's demographics. Cuban artists embraced European modernism and the early part of the 20th century saw a growth in the Cuban Vanguardism movements, which were characterized by a mixture of modern artistic genres.

Some of the more celebrated 20th-century Cuban artists include Amelia Peláez (1896–1968), best known for a series of mural projects, and painter Wifredo Lam (1902–1982) who created a highly personal version of modern primitivism.

Untitled painting, by Amelia Pelaez: This 1947 Amelia Pelaez painting exemplifies her unique and vivid style.

Vanguardia

By the late 1920s, the Vanguardia artists had rejected the academic conventions of Cuba's national art academy. In their formative years, many had lived in Paris, where they studied and absorbed the tenets of surrealism, cubism, and modernist primitivism. They returned to Cuba committed to new artistic innovation and keen to embrace the heritage of their island.

These artists became increasingly political in their ideology, viewing the rural poor as symbols of national identity in contrast to the ruling elite of post independence Cuba. Modernism burst on the Cuban scene as part of the critical movement of national regeneration, which arose in opposition to American neo-colonial control, the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado, and the consequent economic crisis.

Pioneers of the Vanguardia movement include Antonio Gattorno, Eduardo Abela, Fidelio Ponce de León, and Carlos Enríquez Gómez. Gattorno's oil painting The Siesta represents the starting point of the surrealist cycle.

Born around the turn of the century, these artists grew up in turmoil of constructing a new nation and reached maturity when Cubans were engaged in discovering and inventing a national identity. They fully shared in the sense of confidence, renovation, and nationalism that characterized Cuban progressive intellectuals in the second quarter of the twentieth century.

Modern Primitivism

Antonio Gattorno and Eduardo Abela were the earliest painters of their generation to adapt modern European and Mexican art to the interpretation of their Cuban subjects. They also found in the directness and idealization of early Renaissance painting an effective model for their expression of Cuban themes.

These painters' images, for all their differences, shared a modern primitivism view of Cuba as an exotic, timeless, and rural land, inhabited by simple and sensual, if also sad and melancholic, people. Although rooted in Cuba's natural and cultural environment, the vision of lo cubano (the Cuban) was far removed from contemporary historical reality.

Instead it was based on an ideal conception of patria that had been a component of Cuban nationalism and art since the nineteenth century. The emphasis that Enríquez and Ponce placed on the themes of change, transformation, and death have had an enduring impact on Cuban art.

Naïve Art

According to European and North American Art critics, Naïve art is usually characterized by its childlike freshness and amateurish qualities. Artists who work in this style are generally acknowledged as favoring a more primitive or folk style of art. The term naïve itself can be problematic, since it usually means that an artist is self-taught—it has been used in the past by academic artists or critics as a derogatory term, since naïve artists tend to ignore the basic rules of art, especially those regarding perspective.

In spite of ignoring these academic conventions, naïve artists are generally quite sophisticated in their personal forms of artistic expression. The colors used in Cuban naïve art are especially vivid, with artists using the vibrant colors of its tropical home.

Naïve art offers an idealized view of rural life, spiritual references to both Catholicism and Santeria's Orichas (deities), legends, and other aspects of Afro-Cuban culture—past and present. This naïve style of art portrays the typical Cuban worldview of the

enjoyment of life despite its hardships.

Cuban Art After 1930

The masters of the first generation of Cuban modernism set the stage for the prevalence of certain themes that would govern Cuban art after 1930, and which would have varying degrees of impact on those generations that would later emerge entirely in exile after 1960.

Between 1934 and 1940, and still reeling from the overthrow of President Machado, Cuba was searching for its cultural identity in its European and African roots. The landscape, flora, fauna, and lore of the island, as well as its peasants—the often neglected foundation of Cuba's soul and economy—emerged in its art.

Modern Cuban artists continue to create significant work in this tradition, including Juan Ramón Valdés Gómez (called Yiki) and Jose Angel Toirac Batista.

President Geraldo Machado, 1871–1939: Geraldo Machado was president of Cuba from 1925 until he was overthrown in 1933.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Cuban art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- neo-colonial. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/neo-colonial. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Surrealism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Surrealism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- primitivism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/primitivism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Gmachado. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gmachado.PNG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Untitled_painting_1947_Amelia_Pelaez.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/9/9e/Untitled_painting%2C_1947%2C_Amelia_Pelaez.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 29.9: Cuban Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

29.10: Abstract Expressionism

The Development of Abstract Expressionism

Abstract expressionism was an American, post–World War II art movement.

Learning Objectives

Explain the abstract expressionist movement of the 1940s

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Abstract expressionism has an image of being rebellious, anarchic, highly idiosyncratic, and nihilistic. In practice, the term is applied to any number of artists working (mostly) in New York who had quite different styles, and even to work that is neither especially abstract nor expressionist.
- Although it is true that spontaneity or the impression of spontaneity characterized many of the abstract expressionists works, most of these paintings involved careful planning, especially since their large size demanded it.
- Abstract expressionist paintings share certain characteristics, including the use of large canvases and an all-over approach, in which the whole canvas is treated with equal importance.

Key Terms

- **New York School**: The New York School (synonymous with abstract expressionist painting) was an informal group of American poets, painters, dancers, and musicians active in the 1950s and 1960s in New York City.

Abstract Expressionism Overview

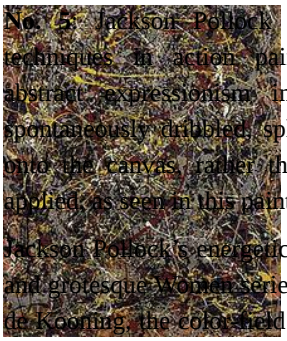
Abstract expressionism was an American post–World War II art movement. Although the term abstract expressionism was first applied to American art in 1946 by the art critic Robert Coates, it had been used previously in Germany's Der Sturm magazine in 1919.

Abstract expressionism is derived from the combination of the emotional intensity and self-denial of the German expressionists with the anti-figurative aesthetic of the European abstract schools, such as futurism, the Bauhaus, and synthetic cubism. Additionally, it has an image of being rebellious, anarchic, highly idiosyncratic, and nihilistic. In practice, the term is applied to any number of artists who worked (mostly) in New York during the 1940s.

Abstract expressionism has many stylistic similarities to the Russian artists of the early 20th century, such as Wassily Kandinsky. Although it is true that spontaneity or the impression of spontaneity characterized many of the abstract expressionists' works, in reality most of these paintings involved careful planning, especially since their large size demanded it. In many instances, abstract art implied the expression of ideas that concern the spiritual, the unconscious, and the mind.

Characteristics of Abstract Expressionist Painting

Abstract expressionism expanded and developed the definitions and possibilities that artists had available in the creation of new works of art. Although abstract expressionism spread quickly throughout the United States, the major centers of this style were New York and California. Abstract expressionist paintings share certain characteristics, including the use of large canvases and an all-over approach, in which the whole canvas is treated with equal importance (as opposed to the center being of more interest than the edges).



No. 5: Jackson Pollock is known for his techniques in action painting, a style of abstract expressionism in which paint is spontaneously dribbled, splashed, or smeared onto the canvas, rather than being carefully applied, as seen in this painting done in 1948.

Jackson Pollock's energetic action paintings, with their busy feel, are different both technically and aesthetically from the violent and grotesque Woman series of Willem de Kooning. In contrast to the emotional energy and gestural surface marks of Pollock and de Kooning, the color-field painters initially appeared to be cool and austere, eschewing the individual mark in favor of large, flat areas of color, which these artists considered to be the essential nature of visual abstraction, along with the actual shape of the canvas. In later years, color-field painting has proven to be both sensual and deeply expressive, albeit in a different way from gestural abstract expressionism.

New York

During the period leading up to and during World War II, modernist artists, writers, and poets, as well as important collectors and dealers, fled Europe and the onslaught of the Nazis for safe haven in the United States. New York replaced Paris as the new center of the art world.

The 1940s in New York City heralded the triumph of American abstract expressionism—a modernist movement that combined lessons learned from Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Surrealism, Joan Miró, Cubism, Fauvism, and early Modernism via the great teachers who arrived in America, like Hans Hofmann from Germany and John D. Graham from Russia.

Graham's influence on American art during the early 1940s was particularly visible in the work of Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock. Gorky's contributions to American and world art are difficult to overestimate. His works—such as The Liver is the Cock's Comb, The Betrothal II, and One Year the Milkweed—immediately prefigured abstract expressionism.

Jackson Pollock

During the late 1940s, Jackson Pollock's radical approach to painting revolutionized the potential for all contemporary art that followed him. To some extent, Pollock realized that the journey toward making a work of art was as important as the work of art itself.

Pollock redefined what it was to produce art. His move away from easel painting and conventionality was a liberating signal to the artists of his era and to all that came after. Artists realized that Jackson Pollock's process—the placing of unstretched raw canvas on the floor where it could be attacked from all four sides using artist materials and industrial materials—essentially took making art beyond any prior boundary.

Jackson Pollock and Action Painting

Action painting, created by Jackson Pollock, is a style in which paint is spontaneously splattered, smeared, or dripped onto the canvas.

Learning Objectives

Describe Jackson Pollock's method of action painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Action painting was developed as part of the abstract expressionism movement that took place in post–World War II America, especially in New York, during the 1940s through until the early 1960s.
- Action painting places the emphasis on the act of painting rather than the final work as an artistic object.
- Jackson Pollock challenged traditional conventions of painting by using synthetic, resin-based paints, laying his canvas on the floor, and using hardened brushes, sticks, and even basting syringes to apply paint.

Key Terms

- **abstract**: Art that does not depict objects in the natural world, but instead uses color and form in a non-representational way.
- **aesthetic**: Concerned with beauty, artistic impact, or appearance.

Action Painting

Action painting is a style of painting in which paint is spontaneously dribbled, splashed, or smeared onto the canvas, rather than being carefully applied with a brush. The resulting work often emphasizes the physical act of painting itself as an essential aspect of the finished work.

Action painting is inextricably linked to abstract expressionism, a school of painting popular in post-World War II America that was characterized by the view that art is non-representational and chiefly improvisational. The major artists associated with this movement are Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Franz Kline, and Mark Rothko, among others.

The term action painting was coined by the American art critic Harold Rosenberg in 1952 in his essay The American Action Painters, signaling a major shift in the aesthetic perspective of the New York School painters and critics. According to Rosenberg, the canvas was not an object, but rather "an arena in which to act. "

Rosenberg's critique shifted the emphasis from the object to the struggle of painting itself, with the finished work being only the physical manifestation, a kind of residue, of the actual work of art, which was in the process of the painting's creation.

Action painting refers to the spontaneous activity that was the action of the painter—through arm and wrist movement, painterly gestures— and led to paint that was thrown, splashed, stained, splattered, poured, and dripped. The painter would sometimes let the paint drip onto the canvas while rhythmically dancing or even while standing on top of the unstretched canvas laying on the floor—both techniques invented by one of the most important abstract expressionists: Jackson Pollock.

Jackson Pollock

My painting does not come from the easel. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides, and literally be in the painting.

Born in Cody, Wyoming in 1912, Jackson Pollock moved to New York City in 1930, where he studied under Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League of New York. In 1948 he married the American painter Lee Krasner, and they moved to what is now known as the Pollock-Krasner House and Studio in the Springs area of East Hampton, Long Island, NY.

The Pollock Barn: Pollock's studio in Springs, New York.

Materials and Process

After his move to Springs, he began painting with his canvases laid out on the studio floor, turning to synthetic, resin-based paints called alkyd enamels. These were much more fluid than traditional paint and, at that time, were a novel medium. Pollock described

his use of household paints, instead of fine art paints, as “a natural growth out of a need.”

He used hardened brushes, sticks, and even basting syringes as paint applicators. By defying the convention of painting on an upright surface, he added a new dimension by being able to view and apply paint to his canvases from all directions—the term all-over painting has been used to describe some of his work, as well as the work of other artists from that time.

In the process of making paintings in this way, he moved away from figurative representation, and challenged the Western tradition of using easel and brush. In addition, he also moved away from the use of only the hand and wrist, since he used his whole body to paint.

Jackson Pollock in his studio: The artist threw, splashed, stained, splattered, poured, and dripped paint to create his works.

Titles with Numbers

Pollock wanted an end to the search for figurative elements in his paintings, so he abandoned titles and started numbering his paintings instead. The numbering relates to the way composers title their works. Furthering the musical metaphor, Pollock’s action paintings have been often described as improvisational works of art, similar to how jazz musicians approach the performance of a piece.

Death

At the peak of his fame, Pollock abruptly abandoned the drip style and by 1951 his works had turned darker in color. This was followed by a return to color, and he reintroduced figurative elements. During this period Pollock moved to a more commercial gallery and there was great demand from collectors for his new paintings.

In response to this pressure, along with personal frustration, his long-term problem with alcoholism worsened. He painted his two last works in 1955. On August 11, 1956, Pollock died in a single-car crash in his Oldsmobile convertible while driving under the influence of alcohol.

After Pollock’s demise at age 44, his widow, Lee Krasner, managed his estate and ensured that Pollock’s reputation remained strong despite changing art-world trends. They are both buried in Green River Cemetery in Springs, Long Island, NY.

Color-Field Painting

Color-field painting can be recognized by its large fields of solid color spread across or stained into the canvas to create areas of unbroken surface and a flat picture plane.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate color-field painting from other contemporary abstract art such as abstract expressionism

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Color-field painting is a style of abstract painting that emerged in New York City during the 1950s and 1960s. It is closely linked to abstract expressionism, post-painterly abstraction, and lyrical abstraction.
- Distinct from the emotional energy and gestural surface marks and paint handling seen in the work of abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollock, color-field painting came across as cool and austere.
- The movement places less emphasis on gesture, brushstrokes, and action in favor of an overall consistency of form and process, with color itself becoming the subject matter.
- Mark Rothko, Frank Stella, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, Adolph Gottlieb, and Morris Louis are among the many artists who used color-field techniques in their work.
- Color-field painters revolutionized the way paint could be effectively applied, through their use of acrylic paint and techniques such as staining and spraying.

Key Terms

- **abstract expressionism**: An American genre of modern art that used improvised techniques to generate highly abstract forms.
- **action painting**: A genre of modern art in which the paint is dribbled, splashed, or poured onto the canvas to obtain a spontaneous and totally abstract image.
- **lyrical abstraction**: A type of abstract painting related to abstract expressionism; in use since the 1940s.

Color-Field Painting

Color-field painting is a style of abstract painting that emerged in New York City during the 1950s and 1960s. Inspired by European modernism and closely related to abstract expressionism, many of its notable early proponents were among the pioneering abstract expressionists.

Color-field is characterized primarily by its use of large fields of flat, solid color spread across or stained into the canvas to create areas of unbroken surface and a flat picture plane. The movement places less emphasis on gesture, brushstrokes, and action than abstract expressionism, favoring instead an overall consistency of form and process, with color itself becoming the subject matter.

Encompassing several decades from the mid-20th century through the early 21st century, the history of color-field painting can be separated into three separate but related generations of painters:

1. Abstract expressionism.
2. Post-painterly abstraction.
3. Lyrical abstraction.

Some of the artists made works in all three eras that relate to all of the three styles.

Clement Greenberg

The focus of attention in the contemporary art world began to shift from Paris to New York after World War II and the development of American Abstract Expressionism. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Clement Greenberg was the first art critic to suggest and identify a dichotomy between differing tendencies within the abstract expressionist canon—especially between action painting and what Greenberg termed post-painterly abstraction (today known as color-field).

Color-Field Formats

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, young artists began to break away stylistically from abstract expressionism, experimenting with new ways of handling paint and color. Moving away from the gesture and angst of action painting towards flat, clear picture planes and a seemingly calmer language, color-field artists used formats of stripes, targets, and simple geometric patterns to concentrate on color as the dominant theme their paintings.

Color-field painting initially referred to a particular type of abstract expressionism, exemplified especially in the work of Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb and several series of paintings by Joan Miró.

Color-field painting sought to rid art of superfluous rhetoric and gesture. Artists like Morris Louis, Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, Friedel Dzubas, and Frank Stella often used greatly reduced formats, simplified or regulated systems, and basic references to nature to draw the focus of the painting to color, and the interactions of color, as the most important element.

Harran II: During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Frank Stella was a significant figure in the emergence of minimalism, post-painterly abstraction, and color-field painting. His shaped canvases of the 1960s revolutionized abstract painting, such as this one from 1967.

Beginning: This color-field painting is characterized by simple geometric forms and repetitive, regulated systems. It was painted by Kenneth Noland in 1958.

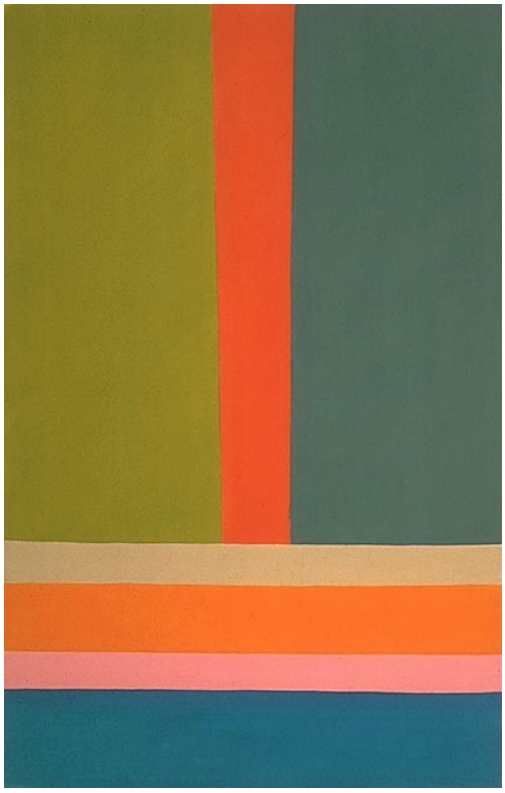
Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?: The flat, solid picture plane that is typical of color-field paintings is evident in this 1966 piece by Barnet Newman, where the color red takes centre stage.

An important distinction between color-field painting and abstract expressionism is the way paint is handled. The most basic defining technique of painting is the application of paint, and the color-field painters revolutionized the way paint could be effectively applied.

Water-soluble, artist-quality acrylic paints first became commercially available in the early 1960s, coinciding with the color-field movement. The most common applications were:

- Stain painting, where artists mix and dilute their paint in buckets or coffee cans to make it a more fluid liquid, then pour it onto raw, unprimed canvas and draw shapes and areas as they stain.
- Spray painting, a technique using a spray gun to create large expanses and fields of color sprayed across the canvas.
- The use of stripes.

Color-field painting initially appeared to be cool and austere due to these methods of handling paint that tended to eschew the individual mark of the artist. However, color-field painting has proven to be both sensual and deeply expressive, albeit in a different way from gestural abstract expressionism.



Big A: Jack Bush was a color-field painter who used geometric, simple forms to highlight the pure interaction of color, as can be seen in this 1968 work.

The New York School

The New York School was an informal group of American abstract painters and other artists that was active in the 1950s and 1960s.

Learning Objectives

Explain what the New York School is known for and who its proponents were

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The New York School was an informal group of abstract painters and other artists in NYC though it has become associated most with the abstract expressionist movement. Although abstract expressionism spread quickly throughout the United States, the major centers of this style were New York City and California.
- New York School artists drew inspiration from surrealism and contemporary art movements such as action painting, abstract expressionism, jazz, improvisational theater, and experimental music.

- The work of the New York School was documented through annual exhibitions of painting and sculpture from 1951–1957, most notably in the 9th Street Art Exhibition.
- In addition to painting, the New York School was associated with many poets, dancers, composers, jazz musicians, and writers.

Key Terms

- **surrealism**: An artistic movement and an aesthetic philosophy, pre-dating abstract expressionism, that aims for the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative powers of the subconscious.
- **GI Bill**: The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known informally as the GI Bill, was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans (commonly referred to as GIs).
- **abstract expressionism**: An American genre of modern art that used improvised techniques to generate highly abstract forms.

The New York School

The New York School was an informal group of American poets, painters, dancers, and musicians that was active in the 1950s and 1960s in New York City. It represented, and is often synonymous with, the art movement of aAbstract expressionism, such as the work of Jackson Pollack and Willem de Kooning.

The artists of the New York School drew their inspiration from surrealism and other contemporary, avant-garde art movements, in particular action painting, abstract expressionism, jazz, improvisational theater, experimental music, and the interaction of friends in the New York City art world's vanguard circle.

No. 5: Jackson Pollack is known for his techniques in action painting, a style of abstract expressionism in which paint is spontaneously dribbled, splashed or smeared onto the canvas, rather than carefully applied, such as this one done in 1948.

Woman V: Willem de Koonig was an influential abstract expressionist painter.

Abstract Expressionism

A school of painting that flourished after World War II until the early 1960s, abstract expressionism is characterized by the view that art is non-representational and chiefly improvisational. Abstract expressionist paintings share certain characteristics, including the use of large canvases, and an all-over approach whereby the whole canvas is treated with equal importance (as opposed to the center being of more interest than the edges). The canvas as the arena became a credo of action painting, while the integrity of the picture plane became a credo of the color-field painters.

The post-World War II era benefited some of the artists who were recognized early on by art critics. Some artists from New York, such as Norman Bluhm and Sam Francis, took advantage of the GI Bill and left for Europe, to return later with acclaim.

Many artists from all across the U.S. arrived in New York City to seek recognition, and by the end of the decade the list of artists associated with the New York School had greatly increased. Painters, sculptors, and printmakers created art that was termed action painting, fluxus, color-field painting, hard-edge painting, pop art, minimal art and lyrical abstraction, among other styles and movements associated with abstract expressionism.

9th Street Art Exhibition

The 9th Street Art Exhibition was held on May 21–June 10, 1951. It was a historical, ground-breaking exhibition that gathered a number of notable artists, and it was the stepping-out of the post-war New York avant-garde, collectively known as the New York School.

The show was hung by Leo Castelli, as he was liked by most of the artists and thought of as someone who would hang the exhibition without favoritism. The opening of the show was a great success. According to the critic, historian, and curator Bruce Altshuler, “It appeared as though a line had been crossed, a step into a larger art world whose future was bright with possibility.”

Interdisciplinary Influences in the New York School

In addition to painting, the New York School was associated with many poets, dancers, composers, jazz musicians, and writers. Poets drew on inspiration from surrealism and the contemporary avant-garde art movements, in particular the action painting of their friends in the New York City art world like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.

In the 1960s, the work of the avant-garde minimalist composers La Monte Young, Philip Glass, Tony Conrad, Steve Reich, and Terry Riley became prominent in the New York art world. The new bebop and cool jazz musicians in the 1940s and 1950s (such as Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Gerry Mulligan) coincided with the New York School and abstract expressionism.

There are also commonalities among the New York School and members of the beat-generation poets who were active in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in New York City, including Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Diane Wakoski, and several others.

Abstract Expressionist Sculpture

During the postwar period, many sculptors made work in the prevalent styles of the time: abstract expressionism, minimalism and pop art.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate how sculpture from 1945–1970 was influenced by abstract expressionism, minimalism, and pop art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Abstract expressionist sculpture was greatly influenced by surrealism and its emphasis on spontaneous or subconscious creation.
- Minimalist sculptures often set out to expose the essence or identity of a subject through the elimination of all non-essential forms or concepts. These works are often characterized by geometric, cubic forms, equality of parts, repetition, neutral surfaces, and the use of industrial materials.
- The sculptors Claes Oldenburg and George Segal were important proponents of pop art in their use of found-objects and how they reproduced everyday commercial objects as fine art.

Key Terms

- **pop art**: An art movement that emerged in the 1950s, that presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including imagery from popular culture such as advertising, news, etc.
- **found object**: A natural object, or one manufactured for some other purpose, considered as part of a work of art.

Abstract Expressionism and Sculpture

While Abstract Expressionism is most closely associated with painting, a number of sculptors were integral to the movement as well. David Smith, Dorothy Dehner, Herbert Ferber, Isamu Noguchi, Ibram Lassaw, Theodore Roszak, Phillip Pavia, Mary Callery, Richard Stankiewicz, Louise Bourgeois, and Louise Nevelson in particular were considered to be important members of the movement.

Similar to abstract expressionist painting, sculptural work from the movement was greatly influenced by surrealism and its emphasis on spontaneous or subconscious creation. Abstract expressionist sculpture, like painting from the movement, was more interested in process than product, which can make it difficult to visually distinguish works by aesthetics alone, so it is important to take into account what the artist has to say about their process.

The sculptures of David Smith, for example, sought to express two-dimensional subjects that had never before been shown in three dimensions. His work blurred the distinctions between sculpture and painting, generally making use of delicate tracery rather than solid form, with a two-dimensional appearance that contradicted the traditional idea of sculpture in the round.

Ancient Household: David Smith was an important abstract expressionist sculptor.

Minimalism

Minimalism during the 1960s and 1970s was a reaction against the painterly subjectivity of abstract expressionism that dominated the previous decades. Minimalist artists explicitly stated that their art was not about self-expression. Instead, Minimalist works often set out to expose the essence or identity of a subject through the elimination of all non-essential forms or concepts.

These works are often characterized by geometric, cubic forms, equality of parts, repetition, neutral surfaces, and the use of industrial materials. Some prominent artists who worked with sculpture and were associated with minimalism (though not all agreed with the association) include Donald Judd, John McCracken, Anthony Caro, Tony Smith, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, and Dan Flavin.

Dan Flavin

Dan Flavin was an American minimalist famous for creating sculptural objects and installations from commercially available fluorescent light fixtures. The lack of the mark of the artist's hand in these cases speak to the notion of exposing the true form of the sculptural object, a significant tenet of the minimalist movement.

Donald Judd

Donald Judd, who disavowed the term minimalism, and preferred to refer to his sculptures as specific objects, used simple, repeated forms to explore space. His works were often fabricated (rather than sculpted) out of metals, industrial plywood and concrete, and therefore defied easy classification as sculpture.

Judd's "Untitled," 1977, applies the simplicity and geometric form typical of minimalist works. Fabricated from concrete, the piece comes across as potentially industrially created as it lacks the mark of the artist's hand that is so often seen in works of art, favoring instead a cool austerity that highlights the qualities of the form and the material used to fabricate it.

Untitled: Donald Judd, who disavowed the term minimalism, preferred to refer to his sculptures as specific objects. Judd uses simple, repeated forms to explore space.

Pop Art

There were numerous artists working in sculpture who were associated with the pop art movement. Two important examples are Claes Oldenburg and George Segal.

Claes Oldenburg

Oldenburg began his artistic practice as part of a group of artists reacting to Abstract Expressionism's sublime gestures with figural drawings and papier mache sculptures. His artistic trajectory took him from making found-object paintings littered with urban debris to plaster sculptures of everyday commercial and manufactured objects. He subsequently created sculptures of similar subjects on larger and larger scales, first sewing soft sculptures out of canvas, then turning to large outdoor monuments in public spaces.

George Segal

George Segal, another artist associated with the pop-art movement, was best known for his life-size figures made from plaster and bandage casts. These figures, often left with minimal color and detail and given a ghostly, hollow appearance, inhabited tableaux constructed of found objects such as a street corner, a bus, or a diner.

Common practices seen in pop-art sculptural work include the display of found art objects, the representation of consumer goods, the placing of typical non-art objects within a gallery setting, and the abstraction of familiar objects. We can see this abstraction in such works as Plug by Oldenburg.

This reproduction of a familiar or mundane object is displayed at such an increased size that the subject matter becomes abstracted, its original function simultaneously altered and highlighted.

Plug: Claes Oldenburg produced oversized reproductions of familiar objects in increased sizes to abstract the subject matter, such as this one done in 1970.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Abstract expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- New York School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/New%20York%20School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/roof-comb. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- No. 5 by Jackson Pollack. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Art History/Glossary. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/Glossary. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/Movements. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/Movements%23Abstract_Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abstract Expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Creativity - An Overview/Invention. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Creativity_-_An_Overview/Invention%23Art.2C_design_and_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/20th Century. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/20th_Century%23Abstract_Expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jackson Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson_Pollock. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Action painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aesthetic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aesthetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- abstract. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/abstract. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- No. 5 by Jackson Pollack. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pollock-barn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson_Pollock. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jackson-Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jackson-Pollock.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- abstract expressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abstract_expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Color field painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_field_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Color field painting. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_field_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- lyrical abstraction. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/lyrical%20abstraction. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- action painting. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/action_painting. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- No. 5 by Jackson Pollack. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pollock-barn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson_Pollock. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jackson-Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jackson-Pollock.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Newman-Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Newman-Who's_Afraid_of_Red,_Yellow_and_Blue.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Post-painterly abstraction. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-painterly_abstraction. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Beginning', magna on canvas painting by Kenneth Noland, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1958.. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:'Beginning',_magna_on_canvas_painting_by_Kenneth_Noland,_Hirshhorn_Museum_and_Sculpture_Garden,_1958..jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bush_Oil.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Bush#/media/File:Bush_Oil.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- The New York School. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_School. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/20th Century. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/20th_Century. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abstract expressionism. **Provided by**: Saylor. **Located at**: http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/abstract-expresionism.pdf. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Surrealism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Surrealism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- GI Bill. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/GI%20Bill. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- abstract expressionism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abstract_expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- No. 5 by Jackson Pollack. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pollock-barn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson_Pollock. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jackson-Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jackson-Pollock.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Newman-Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Newman-Who's_Afraid_of_Red,_Yellow_and_Blue.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Post-painterly abstraction. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-painterly_abstraction. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Beginning', magna on canvas painting by Kenneth Noland, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1958.. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**:

en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:'Beginning',_magna_on_canvas_painting_by_Kenneth_Noland,_Hirshhorn_Museum_and_Sculpture_Garden,_1958..jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Bush_Oil.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Bush#/media/File:Bush_Oil.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Kooning woman v. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kooning_woman_v.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- No. 5 by Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pop art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- David Smith (sculptor). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Smith_(sculptor). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- George Segal (artist). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Segal_(artist). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Minimalism (visual arts). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimalism_(visual_arts). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Abstract expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_expressionism%23Major_paintings_and_sculpture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dan Flavin. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Flavin. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Claes Oldenburg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Claes_Oldenburg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Donald Judd. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Judd. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Pop art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- found-object. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/found-object. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- No. 5 by Jackson Pollack. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Pollock-barn. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson_Pollock. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jackson-Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jackson-Pollock.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Newman-Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Newman-Who's_Afraid_of_Red,_Yellow_and_Blue.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Post-painterly abstraction. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-painterly_abstraction. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 'Beginning', magna on canvas painting by Kenneth Noland, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1958.. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:'Beginning',_magna_on_canvas_painting_by_Kenneth_Noland,_Hirshhorn_Museum_and_Sculpture_Garden,_1958..jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Bush_Oil.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Bush#/media/File:Bush_Oil.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Kooning woman v. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kooning_woman_v.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- No. 5 by Pollock. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/f/f2/Gorky-The-Liver.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ancient Household. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Household.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

- Judd Muenster. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Judd_Muenster.JPG. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Oldenburg 3-way plug PMA. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oldenburg_3-way_plug_PMA.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 29.10: Abstract Expressionism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

30: Global Art Since 1950 CE

30.1: The World Since 1950 CE

30.2: The Art World Grows

30.3: Dematerialization

30.4: Modern Architecture

30.5: Postmodernism

30.6: New Media for Art

This page titled 30: Global Art Since 1950 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

30.1: The World Since 1950 CE

Contemporary Art

Contemporary art is the overall production of art made after World War II.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the categories of late modernism and post modernism in art.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The predominant term for art produced since the 1950s is Contemporary Art. The terminology often points to similarities between late modernism and post-modernism, although there are differences.
- Modern art, radical movements in Modernism, and radical trends regarded as influential and potentially as precursors to late modernism and postmodernism emerged around World War I and particularly in its aftermath.
- The discourse that encompasses the two terms Late Modernism and Postmodern art is used to denote what may be considered as the ultimate phase of modern art, as art at the end of modernism or as certain tendencies of contemporary art.
- Late modernism describes movements which arise from and react against trends in modernism and rejects some aspect of modernism, while fully developing the conceptual potentiality of the modernist enterprise.

Key Terms

- **Cubism**: An early-20th-century avant-garde art movement pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, where objects are analyzed, broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form.
- **precursors**: That which precedes; a forerunner; a predecessor; an indicator of approaching events.
- **Surrealism**: An artistic movement and an aesthetic philosophy, pre-dating abstract expressionism, that aims for the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative powers of the subconscious.

Background

The predominant term for art produced since the 1950s is Contemporary Art. Not all art labeled ‘contemporary’ is modern or postmodern, and the term contemporary encompasses both artists who continue to work in modernist or late modernist traditions, as well as artists who reject modernism for post-modernism or other reasons. Arthur Danto argues explicitly in *After the End of Art* that contemporaneity is the broader term, and that postmodern objects represent a sub-sector of the contemporary movement which replaced modernity and modernism.

Radical movements in modern art

Modern art, radical movements in Modernism, and radical trends regarded as influential and potential precursors to late modernism and postmodernism emerged around World War I and particularly in its aftermath. With the introduction of the use of industrial artifacts in art came movements such as Cubism, Dada, and Surrealism as well as techniques such as collage and art forms such as cinema and the rise of reproduction as a means of creating artworks. Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, and many others created important and influential works from found objects.

Pablo Picasso, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907: This work by Picasso is considered to be a major step towards the founding of the Cubist movement.

Late Modernism vs. Postmodernism

The discourse surrounding the terms Late Modernism and Postmodern art is fraught with many differing opinions. There are those who argue against any division into modern and postmodern periods. Some don't believe that the period called modernism is over or even near the end, and there certainly is no agreement that all art after modernism is post-modern, nor that postmodern art is universally separated from modernism; many critics see it as merely another phase in modern art or another form of late Modernism. There is, however, a consensus that a profound change in the perception of works of art, and works of art themselves, has occurred and that a new era has been emerging on the world stage since at least the 1960s.

Late modernism describes movements which arose from and react against trends in modernism, rejecting some aspect of modernism, while fully developing the conceptual potentiality of the modernist enterprise. In some descriptions post-modernism as a period in art history is completed, whereas in others it is a continuing movement in Contemporary art. In art, the specific traits of modernism which are cited generally consist of: formal purity, medium specificity, art for art's sake, the possibility of authenticity in art, the importance or even possibility of universal truth in art, and the importance of an avant-garde and originality. This last point is one of particular controversy in art, where many institutions argue that being visionary, forward-looking, cutting edge, and progressive are crucial to the mission of art in the present, and that postmodern art therefore represents a contradiction of the value of art of our times.

One compact definition of postmodernism is that it rejects modernism's grand narratives of artistic direction, eradicates the boundaries between high and low forms of art, disrupts the genre and its conventions with collision, collage, pastiche, and fragmentation. Postmodern art comes from the viewpoint that all stances are unstable and insincere, and therefore irony, parody, and humor are the only positions which cannot be overturned by critique or later events.

European Postwar Expressionism

Postwar European artists, unlike American abstract expressionists, grappled with the isolated experience of the individual figure.

Learning Objectives

Contrast European postwar expressionism with contemporary expressionism in America

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Following the end of WWII and the advent of American abstract expressionism, the center of western artistic activity shifted from Paris to New York.
- Many European artists were heavily influenced by the intellectual movement existentialism. This interest is reflected in their attempts to grapple with the meaning of the isolated figure in the postwar world.
- The closest equivalents to American abstract expressionism were the French painting movements Tachisme and Art Informel. The artistic approach of these movements was characterized by intuitive abstraction and abandonment of premeditated structure.

Key Terms

- **existentialism**: A twentieth-century philosophical movement emphasizing the uniqueness of each human existence in freely making self-defining choices. This movement had foundations in the thought of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and was notably represented in the works of Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Gabriel Marcel (1887-1973), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80).
- **Surrealism**: An artistic movement and aesthetic philosophy that aims for the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative powers of the subconscious.

In the Postwar period, the center of modern artistic activity in the west shifted from Paris to New York. One of the biggest contributing factors to this shift was the advent of abstract expressionism, a decidedly American movement often cited as the first American avant-garde. Visionary figures like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman epitomized abstract expressionism in New York, but a similar concern for expressionism was present in the work of many important European artists in the aftermath of World War II.

The Postwar Figure

While both American and European artists were influenced by the postwar rhetoric of anxiety, alienation, and disillusionment, the American school was also heavily influenced by Surrealism and moved increasingly toward reductive abstraction and away from representing biomorphic forms as a means for pursuing the self-expression of the unconscious.

Unlike American Expressionism, which was more abstract, many European painters maintained the primacy of the figure in their work. More concerned with the philosophical and cultural movement of Existentialism, European artists grappled with the meaning of the figure and its isolated, individual experience of the world. Existentialist themes often framed the work of figurative artists such as Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, and Alberto Giacometti. Bacon and Freud were British painters who painted expressive portraits noted for their psychological penetration. Giacometti was a Swiss painter and sculptor mostly known for his sculptures of isolated, attenuated figures. These figures were thought to reflect the postwar view that life was void of meaning.

Alberto Giacometti, Woman of Venice VII, 1956, bronze. Art Gallery of New South Wales.: Giacometti's "Woman of Venice VII" presents the typical solitary figure often seen in his work, which was heavily influenced by existentialist thought.

Francis Bacon, Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X, 1953, oil on canvas, 60 x 46 in. De Moines Art Center, De Moines, Iowa.: This painting by Bacon exemplifies a figurative portrayal of existential and individual angst that European Expressionists typically display in their work.

Tachisme/Art Informel

During this period, European artists engaged more fully in abstraction, particularly those associated with the French painting movements Tachisme (from the French word *tache*, meaning stain) and Art Informel. Tachisme is often regarded as the closest European equivalent to American abstract expressionism, and can be characterized by spontaneous brushwork, drips and blobs of paint applied directly from a tube, and, occasionally, scribbling reminiscent of calligraphy. Important Tachisme painters include Jean-Paul Riopelle, Jean Dubuffet, Pierre Soulages, Nicholas de Stael, Hans Hartung, Serge Poliakoff, Georges Mathieu, and Jean Messagier. Art Informel, a movement closely related to Tachisme, rejected the geometric, hard-edge style of American abstraction in favor of a more intuitive form of expression. "Informel" referred to the lack of form itself and the absence of a premeditated structure.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Demoiselles_d%27Avignon. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Surrealism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Surrealism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Late modernism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_modernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Cubism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- precursors. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/precursors. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Surrealism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Surrealism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Lucian Freud. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucian_Freud. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Existentialism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism%23After_the_Second_World_War. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Alberto Giacometti. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Alberto_Giacometti. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Francis Bacon (artist). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon_(artist). **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Art History/20th Century. **Provided by**: Wikibooks. **Located at**: en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Art_History/20th_Century. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Tachisme. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tachisme. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- existentialism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/existentialism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Les_Demoiselles_d'Avignon.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Study_after_Velazquez's_Portrait_of_Pope_Innocent_X.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- 'Woman of Venice VII', bronze sculpture by Alberto Giacometti, 1956, Art Gallery of New South Wales. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:'Woman_of_Venice_VII',_bronze_sculpture_by_Alberto_Giacometti,_1956,_Art_Gallery_of_New_South_Wales.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 30.1: The World Since 1950 CE is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

30.2: The Art World Grows

Assemblage

Assemblage is the practice of creating two-dimensional or three-dimensional artistic compositions by combining and manipulating found objects.

Learning Objectives

Describe the origins and growth of assemblage art.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

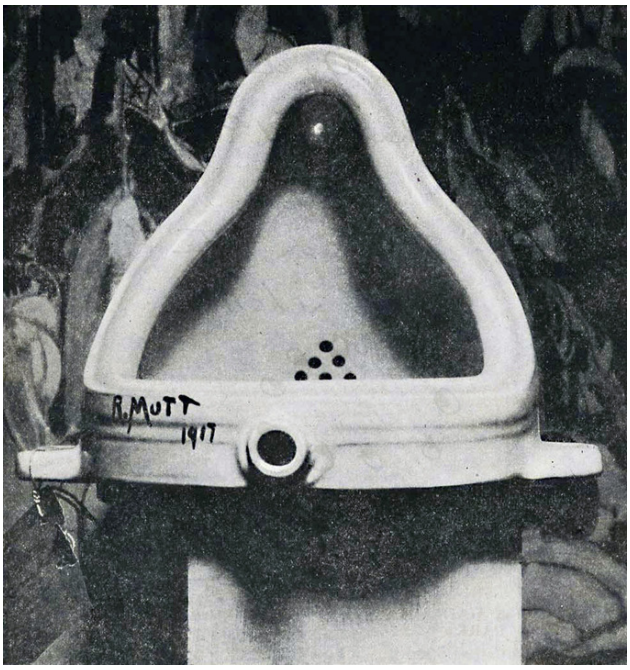
- Though the term was not in use until the 1950s, assemblage originates with early 20th century avant garde movements that sought to challenge traditional artistic media.
- One of the most significant assemblage artists, active beginning in the 1930s and 40s, was Louise Nevelson, whose wooden wall-like sculptures disguised their found-object components under spray paint.
- In the 1960s, neo-Dadaist Robert Rauschenberg became notable for his “combines.” These pieces served to break the boundaries between art, sculpture, and the everyday so that all were present in a single work of art.

Key Terms

- **found-object**: A natural object, or one manufactured for some other purpose, considered as part of a work of art.

Assemblage is an artistic process whereby two- or three-dimensional artistic compositions are created by combining found objects. While similar to the process of collage, it is distinct in its deliberate inclusion of non-art materials.

The origin of the term in its artistic sense can be traced back to the early 1950s, when French artist Jean Dubuffet created a series of collages of butterfly wings titled “assemblages d’empreintes.” However, the origin of the artistic practice dates to the early 20th century, as both Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso as well as others worked with found objects for many years prior to Dubuffet. Russian constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin created his “counter- reliefs ” in the middle of 1910s. Alongside Tatlin, the earliest woman artist to try her hand at assemblage was Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, the Dada Baroness. The most recognizable assemblage pieces from this period are the readymades of Marcel Duchamp, such as *Fountain*, 1917. Readymades were found objects that Duchamp chose and presented as art. The idea was to question the notion of art and the accepted canon, as well as the adoration of art, which Duchamp found “unnecessary. ”



Marcel Duchamp, Fountain: Duchamp's appropriation of a urinal as a piece of art challenged the prevailing definition of sculpture.

Another early and prolific assemblage artist was Louise Nevelson, who began creating her sculptures from found pieces of wood in the late 1930s. Nevelson's most notable sculptures are wooden, wall-like, collage-driven reliefs consisting of multiple boxes and compartments that hold abstract shapes and found objects from chair legs to balusters. Nevelson described these immersive sculptures as "environments." The wooden pieces were cast-off scraps found in the streets of New York. Unlike Duchamp's poor attempt to mask the urinal's true form, Nevelson spray painted found objects to disguise them of their actual use or meaning. Nevelson called herself "the original recycler" because of her extensive use of discarded objects, and credited Pablo Picasso for the cube that served as the groundwork for her cubist-style sculpture.

In 1961, the exhibition "The Art of Assemblage" was featured at the New York Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition showcased the work of early 20th century European artists such as Braque, Dubuffet, Marcel Duchamp, Picasso, and Kurt Schwitters alongside Americans Man Ray, Joseph Cornell, Robert Mallary, and Robert Rauschenberg. It also included lesser-known American West Coast assemblage artists such as George Herms, Bruce Conner, and Edward Kienholz. William C. Seitz, the curator of the exhibition, described assemblages as preformed natural or manufactured materials, objects, or fragments not originally intended as art.

Robert Rauschenberg is a significant proponent of assemblage art. Rauschenberg picked up trash and found objects that interested him on the streets of New York City and brought these back to his studio where they could become integrated into his work. These works, which he called "combines," served as instances in which the delineated boundaries between art, sculpture, and the everyday were broken down so that all were present in a single work of art. Technically "combines" refers to Rauschenberg's work from 1954 to 1962, but the impetus to combine both painting materials and everyday objects such as clothing, urban debris, and taxidermic animals continued throughout his artistic life.

Robert Rauschenberg, Canyon: This assemblage combines the materials of oil, housepaint, pencil, paper, fabric, metal, buttons, nails, cardboard, printed paper, photographs, wood, paint tubes, mirror string, pillow, and bald eagle on canvas.

Performance Art

Performance art is a genre which presents live art with a conceptual basis.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the diverse manifestations and goals of performance art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Though Western performance art began with early 20th century avant-garde movements, it flourished during the 1960s and 70s when minimalism and abstract expressionism fell out of favor.
- Performance art often seeks to blur the line between art and life, with 1960s enthusiasm for this medium also reflecting the period's frustrations with traditional fine art.
- Because performance art shifts between venues, audiences, and styles, it is unattached to established traditions, thriving during sociopolitical unrest and provoking free thought.

Key Terms

- **Conceptual art**: A genre of art in which the transmission of ideas is more important than the creation of an art object.
- **Dada**: A cultural movement that began in Zürich, Switzerland during World War I and peaked from 1916 to 1920. The movement primarily involved visual arts, poetry, theatre, and graphic design, and was characterized by nihilism, deliberate irrationality, disillusionment, cynicism, chance, randomness, and the rejection of the prevailing standards in art.

Performance art is a genre that presents live art, usually referring to conceptual art that conveys content through dramatic interaction rather than traditional performances solely for entertainment.

Origins

Western cultural theorists trace performance art to early 20^{th} century avant-garde movements such as Russian Constructivism, Futurism and Dada. The Dada movement led the way with its unconventional poetry performances, often at the Cabaret Voltaire, by the likes of Richard Huelsenbeck and Tristan Tzara. However, the most significant wave of performance art occurred in the 1960s and 70s when abstract expressionism and minimalism became less popular. The enthusiasm for live and innovative performance reflected this period's interest in moving past preconceptions that limited what could qualify as fine art.

Styles

Performance art was one of many disparate trends that developed as abstract expressionism and minimalism faded. Its breadth and widespread usage, along with each performance existing as a unique occurrence, makes it difficult to summarize performance art's characteristics. Performance art in the 1960s and 70s included "actions," body art, happenings, endurance-focused, and ritual - focused performances. "Cut Piece," an action performed by Yoko Ono in several venues, demonstrates the genre. Ono walked onstage and then knelt on the floor while audience members were encouraged to come onstage and cut off all of her clothing.

The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Yoko Ono "Cut Piece" Performance Art

Happenings, a term coined by Allan Kaprow in 1958, are unique, improvisational events that can take place in any venue and require participation from spectators. There is no structured beginning, middle, or end, and no hierarchy or distinction between the artist and the viewers. The viewers' reactions decide the art piece, making each happening a unique experience that cannot be replicated. Through happenings, the separations between life, art, artist, and audience become blurred.

Argentine artist Marta Minujín in a 1965 happening: *Reading the News*, a happening in which the artist got into the Río de La Plata wrapped in newspapers.

The early works of Marina Abramović exemplify endurance-focused, ritual-based performances that explored issues of human determination, patience and bodily limits. In her first performance, Rhythm 10 (1973), Abramović explored ritual and gesture. Using twenty knives and two tape recorders, she played a Russian game in which she aimed rhythmic knife jabs between her splayed fingers. With this piece and as a performer, Abramović was exploring states of consciousness. Each time she cut herself, she picked up a new knife, began again, and recorded her results. After cutting herself twenty times, she replayed the tape, listening to the sounds she had made and repeating her previous movements. By replicating her mistakes, she was merging her past actions with the present moment. She explored her physical and mental limits by injuring herself, and then honored what she had done by

repeating the gestures, encouraging the audience to think about what her ritual symbolized and what it meant to repeat the gestures after her ritual had already been performed.

Performance art seeks to demystify fine art by blurring the line between art and life. Because it can shift fluidly between venues, audiences, and styles and is unattached to traditional forms, performance art thrives in times of social upheaval and political unrest, providing a public forum for discussion, experimentation, and outrage. In the 1980s, performance art fell from favor following renewed interest in painting, but was resurrected in the 1990s in response to issues involving race, immigration, gay rights, and AIDS. Since then, performance art has become increasingly accepted in mainstream culture, shown in art museums and becoming a topic for scholarly research.

Marina Abramović, The Artist is Present, MOMA, 2010: *The Artist Is Present* is a 736-hour and 30-minute static, silent piece in which Abramovic sits immobile while spectators are invited to take turns sitting opposite her, for as long as they want, while she maintains focused eye contact with them.

Photography in the Latter 20th Century

In the early 20th century, photography evolved through multiple styles as it became accepted as a legitimate fine art medium.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the progression of photography from pictorialism and straight photography to the snapshot aesthetic and conceptual work

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The earliest fine art photography imitated painting styles, often using soft focus for a dreamy, romantic look known as pictorialism.
- In reaction to pictorialism, some fine art photographers advocated for “straight photography,” giving the sharply focused photograph the status of art in its own right.
- Following the World Wars, artistic tastes changed and led to the harsher, cleaner aesthetics of modern art and more interest in urban subject matter.
- Genre photography persisted and the 1960s saw the development of the “snapshot aesthetic,” featuring banal everyday subject matter and off-centered framing.
- Conceptual photography developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While these artists utilize photography to illustrate an idea, they often do not consider themselves photographers but rather use photography as a means to document performances, ephemeral sculpture, or actions.

Key Terms

- **Conceptual art**: A genre of art in which the transmission of ideas is more important than the creation of an art object.

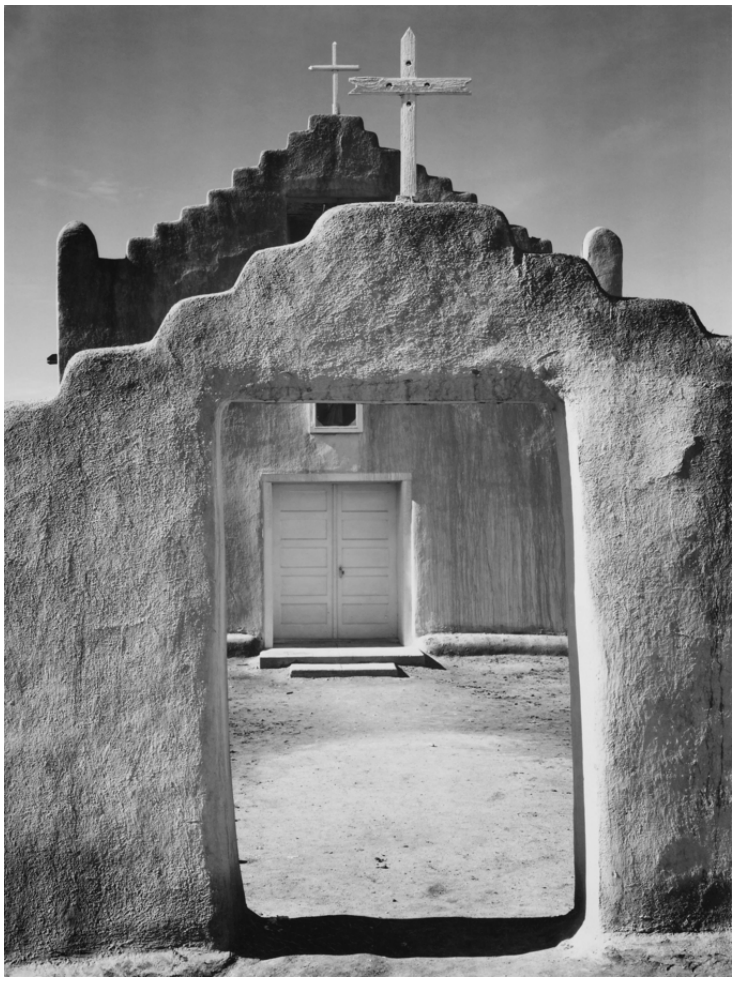
During the 20th century, both fine art photography and documentary photography became accepted by the English-speaking art world and the gallery system. In the United States, pioneer photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, John Szarkowski, F. Holland Day, and Edward Weston spent their lives advocating for photography as a fine art. A culminating moment for pictorialism and for photography in general occurred in 1910, when the Albright Gallery in Buffalo bought 15 photographs from Alfred Stieglitz's 291 Gallery. This was the first time photography was officially recognized as an art form worthy of a museum collection.

Pictorialism

At first, fine art photographers tried to imitate painting styles, giving rise to pictorialism, a style that uses soft focus to create a dreamy, romantic look. Pictorialism dominated photography from about 1885 to 1915, though it was still promoted by some as late as the 1940s. In general, this term refers to a style in which the photographer has somehow manipulated what would otherwise be a straightforward photograph as a means of "creating" an image rather than simply recording it. Typically, a pictorial photograph lacks sharp focus, is printed in one or more colors rather than black-and-white (ranging from warm brown to deep blue), and may have visible brush strokes or other surface manipulation. For the pictorialist, a photograph, like a painting, was a way of projecting emotional intent into the viewer 's imagination.

George Seeley, The Black Bowl: George Seeley, The Black Bowl, c. 1907. Published in Camera Work, No. 20, 1907, is a good example of a Pictorialist photograph due to its soft focus and painterly aesthetic.

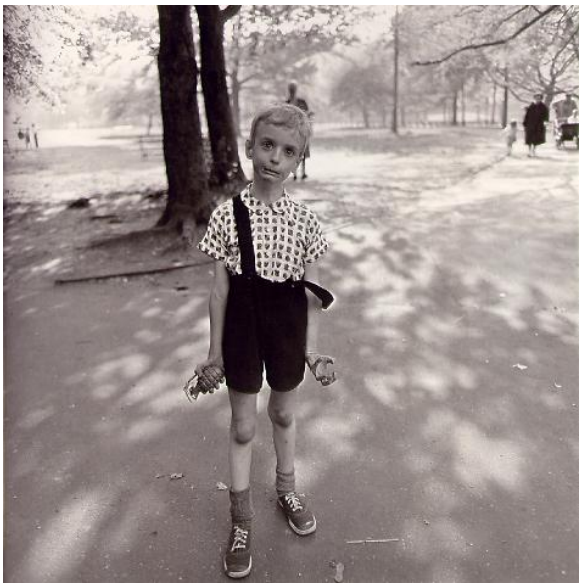
As the harsh realities of World War I began to spread around the world, the public's taste for the art of the past began to change. Pictorialism gradually declined in popularity after 1920, fading out of popularity completely by the end of World War II. Weston, Ansel Adams, and others later began to move away from pictorialism and created the Group f/64, which advocated for 'straight photography', or, the literal representation of a subject rather than an imitation of something else. During this period, the new style of photographic modernism came into vogue, and the public's interest shifted to more sharply focused images. As developed countries turned their focus to industrialism and growth, art reflected this change by featuring hard-edged images of new buildings, airplanes, and industrial landscapes. Until the late 1970s several genres predominated, including nudes, portraits, and natural landscapes (exemplified by Ansel Adams).



Ansel Adams, Church, Taos Pueblo: Ansel Adams, Church, Taos Pueblo National Historic Landmark, New Mexico, 1942. From the series Ansel Adams Photographs of National Parks and Monuments, compiled 1941-42, documenting the period ca. 1933-42.

Snapshot Aesthetic

Around 1963, the term “snapshot aesthetic” entered the vocabulary of the fine art photography world. John Szarkowski, who was head of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art from 1962 to 1991, became one of the trend’s largest promoters, and it became especially fashionable from the late 1970s until the mid 1980s. The snapshot aesthetic typically features off-centered framing and everyday subject matter often presented without apparent link from image-to-image, relying instead on the juxtaposition and disjunction of individual photographs. Notable practitioners include Garry Winogrand, Nan Goldin, Wolfgang Tillmans, Martin Parr, William Eggleston, Diane Arbus, and Terry Richardson. These photographers aimed not “to reform life but to know it” (John Szarkowski, Diane Arbus).



Diane Arbus, Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park, 1962: Diane Arbus exemplifies the “snapshot aesthetic” in her work which presents images from the everyday.

Conceptual Photography

Cindy Sherman, Chromogenic Color Print, 1981: Cindy Sherman used a type of performance in her work by photographing herself dressed in costume, expanding the possibilities of the medium.

Conceptual photography is a type of photography that illustrates an idea. While illustrative photographs have been made since the medium ‘s invention, the term conceptual photography derives from conceptual art, a movement of the late 1960s. Today the term describes either a methodology or a genre. Conceptual art of the late 1960s and early 1970s often involved photography that documented performances, ephemeral sculpture, or actions. The artists did not describe themselves as photographers. Since the 1970s, artists like Cindy Sherman, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Demand have been described as conceptual. Although their work does not generally resemble the lo-fi aesthetic of 1960s conceptual art, they have certain methods in common such as documenting performance (Sherman), typological or serial imagery (Ruff), or the restaging of events (Demand).

Contemporary photography has seen a trend of carefully staging and lighting a picture rather than hoping to “discover” it ready-made. Photographers such as Gregory Crewdson and Jeff Wall are noted for the quality of their staged pictures. Additionally, new technological trends in digital photography have created the possibility of full-spectrum photography, where careful filtering choices across the ultraviolet, visible, and infrared lead to new artistic visions.

Pop Art

The pop art movement began in the 1960s and questioned the boundaries between “high” and “low” art.

Learning Objectives

Identify examples of American pop art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Pop art presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including aspects of mass culture, such as advertising, comic books, and mundane, cultural objects in its work. One of the goals of pop art was to blur and question the boundaries between “high” art and “low” art.
- Neo-Dada was one minor artistic movement that contributed to the formation of pop art. In reaction to abstract expressionism, neo-Dadaists sought to create meaning solely through the use of conventional symbols and icons such as targets, flags, letters, and numbers.
- The works of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol exemplify pop art’s direct attachment to commonplace images in American popular culture, while treating the subject matter in a cool, impersonal manner. This detached style illustrated the idealization of mass production and its inherent anonymity.

Key Terms

- **Ben-Day dots**: The Ben-Day dots printing process, named after illustrator and printer Benjamin Henry Day, Jr., is similar to pointillism. Depending on the effect, colors, and optical illusion needed, small colored dots are closely spaced, widely spaced, or overlapping. Pulp comic books of the 1950s and 1960s used Ben-Day dots in the four process colors (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black) to inexpensively create shading and secondary colors such as green, purple, orange, and flesh tones.
- **mass**: A large quantity; a sum.
- **abstract expressionism**: An American genre of modern art that used improvised techniques to generate highly abstract forms
- **silk-screen printing**: A method of reproducing colored artwork using a cut stencil attached to a stretched, fine-meshed silk screen.

Although it originated in Britain in the late 1950s, pop art did not gain momentum in America until a full decade later. By this time, American advertising had adopted many elements and inflections of modern art and functioned at a sophisticated level. Consequently, American artists had to search deeper for dramatic styles that would distance fine art from well-designed and clever commercial materials. Pop art presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including aspects of mass culture, such as advertising, comic books, and mundane, cultural objects. One of the goals of Pop Art was to blur and draw into question the boundaries between “high” and “low” art.

Neo-Dada

Two important painters in the establishment of America’s pop art vocabulary were the American neo-Dadaists Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. In the mid-1950s, Jasper Johns began to appropriate popular abstract iconography for painting, allowing a set of familiar associations to answer the need for a subject. In contrast to the abstract expressionists, who not only disdained subject matter but also took their paintings to be an index of the artist’s presence on the canvas, Neo-Dadaists sought to create meaning solely through the use of conventional symbols and icons such as targets, flags, letters, and numbers. These neutral subjects rejected a reliance on the hand of the artist in the production of meaning–the surface of the painting could declare itself without reference to the persona that created it.

Robert Rauschenberg also was considered a Neo-Dadaist, and his “combines” incorporated found objects, printed materials, and urban debris with traditional fine art materials. Combines served to break down the delineated boundaries between art, sculpture, and the everyday object so that all were recontextualized in a single work of art.

Jasper Johns, Flag, 1954-55, Encaustic, oil, collage on fabric mounted on plywood, 42 x 61 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York.: *Flag* by Jasper Johns presents the American flag as subject matter, thus invoking a plethora of associations and juxtapositions between the popular image, symbol, and fine art.

Roy Lichtenstein

Of equal importance to American pop art is Roy Lichtenstein. His work defines the basic premise of pop art better than any other through parody. Selecting the old-fashioned comic strip as subject matter, Lichtenstein produced hard-edged, precise compositions that documented mass culture while simultaneously creating soft parodies. Lichtenstein used oil and Magna paint in his best known works, such as Drowning Girl (1963), which was appropriated from the lead story in DC Comics' Secret Hearts #83. His characteristic style featured thick outlines, bold colors and Ben-Day dots to represent certain colors, as if created by photographic reproduction. Lichtenstein's contribution to Pop Art merged popular and mass culture with the techniques of fine art while injecting humor, irony, and recognizable imagery and content into the final product. The paintings of Lichtenstein, like the works of many other pop artists, shared a direct attachment to the commonplace image of American popular culture while treating the subject matter in a cool, impersonal manner. This detached style illustrated the idealization of mass production and its inherent anonymity.

Roy Lichtenstein, Drowning Girl, 1963, MOMA: Lichtenstein calls into question notions of appropriation while simultaneously blurring the lines between high and low art in this painting of a scene from a popular comic book.

Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol is probably the most famous figure in pop art. Warhol attempted to take pop beyond art to become a lifestyle, and his work often displays a lack of human affectation that dispenses with the irony and parody of many of his peers. Warhol's artwork uses many forms of media including and drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, silk screening, sculpture, film, and music. His studio, The Factory, was a famous gathering place that brought together distinguished intellectuals, drag queens, playwrights,

bohemian street people, Hollywood celebrities, and wealthy patrons. New York's Museum of Modern Art hosted a Symposium on Pop Art in December 1962, during which artists like Warhol were attacked for "capitulating" to consumerism. Critics were scandalized by Warhol's open embrace of market culture. This symposium set the tone for Warhol's reception.

Throughout the decade it became increasingly clear that there had been a profound change in the culture of the art world, and that Warhol was at the center of that shift. In the early 60s, Warhol pared his image vocabulary down to the icon itself–brand names, celebrities, dollar signs–and removed all traces of the artist's hand in the production of his work. Eventually, he moved from hand painting to silk-screen printing, removing the handmade element altogether. The element of detachment reached such an extent at the height of Warhol's fame that he had several assistants producing his silk-screen multiples.

Andy Warhol, Campbell's Soup Cans, 1962, synthetic polymer on 32 canvases. 20 x 16 in each. Museum of Modern Art, New York.: Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans have become synonymous with the pop art movement and exemplify his preoccupation with notions of pop culture and capitalism.

The legacy of Pop Art is expansive, and much of the Pop art of the 1960s is considered incongruent as many different conceptual practices fed into the movement and are reflected by a wide variety of artists. The list of notable Pop artists is extensive, but some major proponents include Jim Dine, Richard Hamilton, Keith Haring, David Hockney, Alex Katz, Yayoi Kusama, John McHale, Claes Oldenburg, Julia Opie, Eduardo Paolozzi, Sigmar Polke, Ed Ruscha, George Segal, and Tom Wesselman.

Photorealism

Photorealism or super-realism is a genre of art that began in the late 1960s, encompassing painting, drawing, and other graphic media in which an artist studies a photograph and then attempts to reproduce the image as realistically as possible.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate photorealism within the era's contemporary art movements

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Pop art and photorealism were both reactionary movements stemming from the ever-increasing and overwhelming abundance of photographic media, which by the mid 20th century had become such a massive phenomenon that it was threatening to lessen the value of imagery in art.
- Photorealism uses photographs transferred to canvas in paint with tight and precise composition.
- Super-realist painters chose difficult subject matter that emphasized the technical prowess and virtuosity required to simulate, such as reflective surfaces or embellished environments.

Key Terms

- **abstract expressionism**: An American genre of modern art that used improvised techniques to generate highly abstract forms.

- **Pop art**: An art movement of the 1950s that presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including imagery from popular culture such as advertising and news.

Photorealism, also known as super-realism or hyper-realism, is a genre of art that makes use of photography to create a highly realistic art work in another medium. The term was first applied in America during the late 1960s. Like pop art, photorealism was a reactionary movement that stemmed from the overwhelming abundance of photographic media, which by the mid 20th century had grown into such a massive phenomenon that it threatened to lessen the value of imagery in art. While pop artists were primarily pointing out the absurdity of the imagery that dominated mass culture—such as advertising, comic books, and mass-produced cultural objects—photorealists aimed to reclaim and exalt the value of the image.

Process

Photorealist painters gather imagery and visual information through photographs, which are transferred onto canvas either by slide projection or the traditional grid. The resulting images are often direct copies of the photograph, usually on an increased scale. Stylistically, this results in painted compositions that are tight and precise, often with an emphasis on imagery that requires a high level of technical prowess and virtuosity to simulate; for example, reflections in surfaces and embellished, man-made environments.

Ralph Goings, Ralph's Diner, 1981-82, oil on canvas.: This painting by Ralph Goings displays the artists technical prowess in the realistic depiction of many reflective, textured surfaces.

Richard Estes, Telephone Booths, 1968, oil on canvas: Richard Estes reproduces in a paint the complex image of a reflected urban environment on a telephone booth.

The first generation of American photorealists included such painters as Richard Estes, Ralph Goings, Chuck Close, Charles Bell, Audrey Flack, Don Eddy, Robert Bechte, and Tom Blackwell.

Chuck Close, *Mark* (1978–1979), acrylic on canvas, left; detail of eye, right: Chuck Close is known for his intensely detailed paintings which are essentially indistinguishable from photographic images.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 30.2: The Art World Grows is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

30.3: Dematerialization

Conceptual Art

Conceptual art is defined by concepts or ideas taking precedence over traditional aesthetic and material concerns.

Learning Objectives

Relate the development of conceptual art to both formalism and the dematerialization of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Conceptual art emerged as a movement during the 1960s. In part, it was a reaction against formalism articulated by the influential New York art critic Clement Greenberg.
- Some have argued that conceptual art continued this dematerialization of art by removing the need for objects altogether, while others, including many of the artists themselves, saw conceptual art as a radical break with Greenberg's formalist modernism.
- French artist Marcel Duchamp paved the way for the conceptualists, providing examples of prototypically conceptual works such as his ready-mades.
- Conceptual artists began a far more radical interrogation of art than was previously possible. One of the first and most important things they questioned was the common assumption that the role of the artist was to create special kinds of material objects.
- The notion that art should examine its own nature was already a potent aspect of the influential art critic Clement Greenberg's vision of modern art during the 1950s.

Key Terms

- **conceptualist**: An artist involved in the conceptualism movement.
- **dematerialization**: The act or process of dematerializing.

Formalism, Dematerialization and the Commodification of Art

Conceptual art is defined by the concepts of a work taking precedence over the traditional aesthetic and material concerns. It began to emerge as a movement during the 1960s, in part as a reaction against formalism as then articulated by the influential New York art critic Clement Greenberg. According to Greenberg, modern art followed a process of progressive reduction and refinement toward the goal of defining the essential, formal nature of each medium. The task of painting, for example, was to define precisely what kind of object a painting truly is: what makes it a painting and nothing else. For example, if the nature of paintings is as flat canvas objects onto which colored pigment is applied, elements such as figuration, 3-D perspective illusion, and references to external subject matter were extraneous to the essence of painting and should thus be removed.

Some have argued that conceptual art continued this dematerialization of art by removing the need for objects altogether while others, including many of the artists themselves, saw conceptual art as a radical break with Greenberg's formalist modernism. Later artists continued to share a preference for art to be self-critical and a distaste for illusion. However, by the end of the 1960s it was clear that Greenberg's stipulations for art to continue within the confines of each medium and exclude external subject matter no longer held traction. Lucy Lippard, an internationally known writer, art critic, activist and curator from the United States, was among the first writers to recognize the dematerialization at work in conceptual art and was an early champion of feminist art. Her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* remains a seminal text on the subject.

Conceptual art also reacted against the commodification of art, attempting subversion of the gallery or museum as the location and determiner of art and the art market as the owner and distributor of art. Many conceptual artists' work can therefore only be known through documentation such as photographs, written texts, or displayed objects, which some might argue are not in themselves the art. Conceptual art is sometimes reduced to a set of written instructions describing a work without actually making it, emphasizing the notion of the idea as more important than the artifact.

Precursors

French artist Marcel Duchamp paved the way for the conceptualists, providing examples of prototypically conceptual works such as the ready-mades. The most famous of Duchamp's ready-mades was Fountain (1917), a standard urinal basin signed by the artist with the pseudonym "R.Mutt" and submitted for inclusion in the annual, unjuried exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York. (It was rejected.) In traditional terms, a commonplace object such as a urinal cannot be art because it is not made by an artist or with any intention of being art, nor is it unique or handcrafted. Duchamp's relevance and theoretical influence for future "conceptualists" was later acknowledged by US artist Joseph Kosuth in his 1969 essay, "Art After Philosophy," when he wrote, "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually. "

Marcel Duchamp, Fountain: Duchamp's appropriation of a urinal as a piece of art challenged the prevailing definition of sculpture.

Historical Examples

In 1953, artist Robert Rauschenberg created *Erased De Kooning Drawing*, which was literally a drawing by Willem de Kooning that Rauschenberg erased. It raised many questions about the fundamental nature of art, challenging the viewer to consider whether erasing another artist's work could be a creative act, as well as whether the work was only "art" because the famous Rauschenberg had done it.

In 1960, Yves Klein carried out an action called *A Leap Into The Void*, in which he attempted to fly by leaping out of a window. As with much of conceptual art, the performance is largely presented through its documentation. In 1961, Robert Rauschenberg sent a telegram to the Galerie Iris Clert which said: "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so" as his contribution to an exhibition of portraits. In 1969, Vito Acconci created *Following Piece*, in which he followed random members of the public until they disappeared into a private space. The piece is presented as photographs.

Contemporary Influence

The first wave of the conceptual art movement extended from approximately 1967 to 1978. Early concept artists like Henry Flynt, Robert Morris, and Ray Johnson influenced the later movement of conceptual art. Conceptual artists like Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, and Lawrence Weiner have proven influential on subsequent artists, and well-known contemporary artists such as Mike Kelley and Tracey Emin are sometimes labeled second- or third-generation conceptualists or post-conceptual artists.

Contemporary artists have addressed many of the concerns of the conceptual art movement. While they may or may not term themselves conceptual artists, ideas such as anti-commodification, social and/or political critique, and ideas/information as medium continue to be aspects of contemporary art, especially among artists working with installation art, performance art, net art, and electronic/digital art.

Minimalism

The term minimalism is used to describe a trend in design and architecture in which the subject is reduced to its necessary elements.

Learning Objectives

Describe the elements of minimalist architecture and design and the influence of Japanese tradition

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Minimalist design has been highly influenced by Japanese traditional design and architecture. In addition, the work of De Stijl artists is a major source of reference for this style.
- The term minimalism dates to the early 19th century and gradually became an important movement in response to the ornate design of the previous period. Minimalist architecture became popular in the late 1980s in London and New York.
- The concept of minimalist architecture is to strip everything down to its essential qualities to achieve simplicity.
- Zen concepts of simplicity transmit the ideas of freedom and essence of living. Simplicity is not only an aesthetic value, it has a moral perception that looks into the nature of truth and reveals the inner qualities of materials and objects.

Key Terms

- **Zen**: A philosophy of calm reminiscent of that of the Buddhist denomination.
- **aesthetic**: Concerned with beauty, artistic impact, or appearance.

The term minimalism can be used to describe a trend in design and architecture in which the subject is reduced to only its necessary elements. Minimalist design in the west has been highly influenced by Japanese traditional design and architecture. In addition, the work of De Stijl artists is a major source of reference for this style. De Stijl expanded the ideas that could be expressed by using basic elements such as lines and planes organized in very particular manners.

Barcelona Pavilion: The reconstruction of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion in Barcelona is minimalist in its use of space and pared down architectural elements.

Architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe adopted the motto "less is more" to describe his aesthetic of arranging the numerous necessary components of a building to create an impression of extreme simplicity. By enlisting every element and detail to serve multiple visual and functional purposes, such as designing a floor to also serve as the radiator or a massive fireplace to also house the bathroom, spaces become visually pared down and highly functional.

Minimalist architecture became popular in the late 1980s in London and New York, a few decades after the movement's prevalence in other art forms. White elements, cold lighting, large open spaces with minimal objects and furniture, and a simplified living space revealed the essential quality of buildings and attitudes toward life. While ornamentation is spare, it's not totally absent. Instead this style maintains the idea that all parts, details, and joinery have been reduced such that nothing could be further removed to improve the design.

Minimalist design and architecture accounts for light, form, material, space and location. In minimalist architecture, design elements convey the message of simplicity. The basic geometric forms, elements without decoration, simple materials and

repetitions of structures represent a sense of order and essential quality. The movement of natural light in buildings reveals simple and clean spaces. In late 19th century, as the arts and crafts movement became popularized in Britain, people valued the attitude of "truth to materials." Minimalist architects humbly listen to figure, seeking essence and simplicity by rediscovering the valuable qualities in simple common materials.

The idea of simplicity appears in many cultures, especially the Japanese traditional culture of Zen Philosophy. Zen concepts of simplicity transmit the ideas of freedom and essence of living. Simplicity is not only an aesthetic value, but has a moral perception that considers the nature of truth and reveals the inner qualities of materials and objects for their essence. For example, the dry rock garden in Ryoan-ji temple demonstrates the concepts of simplicity from the considered setting of a few stones and a huge empty space. Ryoan-ji, attributed by some scholars to the famous landscape painter and monk Sōami, is believed to have originally been designed with the concept of shakkei, in which background landscape is incorporated into the composition of the garden.

Ryoan-Ji Temple: Ryoan-Ji Temple is a Zen temple that exemplifies the minimalism and simplicity that is typical in Japanese design.

Process Art

Process-based art focuses on the creative journey instead of the end product.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the focus of process art with that of product-focused artists

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The processes involved in creating art are any actions used to make a work of art.
- The process art movement began in the U.S. and Europe in the mid-1960s. It has roots in performance art and Dadaism.
- In process art, the ephemeral nature and insubstantiality of materials are often showcased and highlighted.
- Process art and environmental art are directly related. Process artists engage the primacy of organic systems, using perishable, insubstantial, and transitory materials.

Key Terms

- **ephemeral**: Something which lasts for a short period of time.

Background

Process art is an artistic movement and creative sentiment in which end product is not the primary focus. The processes referred to are those of creating art: the gathering, sorting, collating, associating, patterning, and the initiation of actions that must be in place.

Process art is concerned with actual creation and how actions can be defined as art, seeing the expression of the artistic process as more significant than the product created by the process. Process art often focuses on motivation, intent, the rationale, with art viewed as a creative journey that doesn't necessarily lead to a traditional fine art object destination.

Process Art Movement

The process art movement began in the U.S. and Europe in the mid-1960s. It has roots in performance art, the Dada movement and, more traditionally, the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock. Change, transience, and embracing serendipity are themes in this movement. In 1968, the Guggenheim Museum hosted a groundbreaking exhibition and essay defining the movement by Robert Morris, noting: "Process artists were involved in issues attendant to the body, random occurrences, improvisation, and the liberating qualities of nontraditional materials such as wax, felt, and latex. Using these, they created eccentric forms in erratic or irregular arrangements produced by actions such as cutting, hanging, and dropping, or organic processes such as growth, condensation, freezing, or decomposition. "

Human Need/Desire/Hope/Dream (Bruce Nauman, 1983): Like the live immediacy of performance art, process art is focused on the creative journey instead of a traditional fine art destination.

In process art, the ephemeral nature and insubstantiality of materials are often showcased and highlighted. Process art and environmental art are directly related: process artists engage the primacy of organic systems, using perishable, insubstantial, and transitory materials such as dead rabbits, steam, fat, ice, cereal, sawdust, and grass. The materials are often left exposed to natural forces like gravity, time, weather, or temperature in order to celebrate natural processes.

Process Art Precedents

Inspiring precedents for process art that are fundamentally related include indigenous rites, shamanic and religious rituals, and cultural forms such as sandpainting, sun dance, and tea ceremonies. For example, the construction process of a Vajrayana Buddhist sand mandala by monks from Namgyal Monastery in Ithaca, New York was recorded and exhibited online by the Ackland's Yager Gallery of Asian Art. The monks' creation of a Medicine Buddha mandala began February 26, 2001 and concluded March 21, 2001, and the dissolution of the mandala was on June 8, 2001, demonstrating that the process of creating the art was more important than preserving the finished product.

The Influence of Feminism

Feminist and intersectional sentiments in art have always existed in opposition to the white, patriarchal foundations and current realities of western art markets and art history.

Learning Objectives

Describe the origin, evolution, and influence of the feminist art movement during the late 20th century

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Feminism in art has always sought to change the reception of contemporary art and bring visibility to women within art history and practice.
- In line with the development of western civilization, art in the west has been built upon white, patriarchal, capitalist values, and while women artists have always existed they have largely been omitted from history.
- The women-in-arts movement corresponded with general developments in feminism in the 1960s and 1970s.
- One of the first self-proclaimed feminist art classes in the United States was started in the fall of 1970 at Fresno State University by visiting artist Judy Chicago. The students who formed the program included Susan Boud, Dori Atlantis, Gail Escola, Vanalyne Green, Suzanne Lacy, and Cay Lang.
- The strength of the feminist movement allowed for the emergence and visibility of many new types of work by women.
- From 1980 onward, art historian Griselda Pollock challenged the dominant museum models of art and history so excluding of women's artistic contributions. She helped articulate the complex relations between femininity, modernity, psychoanalysis, and representation.

Key Terms

- **feminism**: A social theory or political movement supporting the equality of both sexes in all aspects of public and private life; specifically, a theory or movement that argues that legal and social restrictions on females must be removed in order to bring about such equality.

Origins

Feminism in art has always sought to change the reception of contemporary art and bring visibility to women within art history and practice. In line with the development of western civilization, art in the west has been built upon white, patriarchal, capitalist values,
and while women artists have always existed they have largely been omitted from history. Feminism has always existed and generally prioritizes the creation of an opposition to this system. Corresponding with general developments within feminism, the so-called "second wave" of the movement gained some prominence in the 1960s and flourished throughout the 1970s.

The Feminist Art Program

One of the first self-proclaimed feminist art classes in the United States, the Feminist Art Program, was started in the fall of 1970 at Fresno State University by visiting artist Judy Chicago. Chicago (born 1939) is an American feminist artist and writer known for her large collaborative art installation pieces which examine the role of women in history and culture. Chicago's work incorporates artistic skills stereotypically placed upon women, such as needlework, contrasted with stereotypical male skills such as welding and pyrotechnics. Chicago's masterpiece work is a mixed-media piece known as *The Dinner Party*, which is in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.

Judy Chicago's installation "The Dinner Party" at the Brooklyn Museum of Art: The Dinner Party is an installation artwork by feminist artist Judy Chicago depicting place settings for 39 mythical and historical famous women.

The students who formed the Feminist Art Program along with Judy Chicago included Susan Boud, Dori Atlantis, Gail Escola, Vanalyne Green, Suzanne Lacy, and Cay Lang. The group refurbished an off-campus studio space in downtown Fresno for artists to create and discuss their work "without male interference". Participants lived and worked in the studio, leading reading groups and collaborating on art. In 1971, the class became a full-time program at the university.

The program was different than a standard art class. Instead of the typical teaching of techniques and art history, students focused on raising their feminist consciousness. Students would share personal experiences about specific topics like money and relationships. It was believed that by sharing these experiences, students were able to insert more emotion into their artwork. Furthermore, instead of supporting the typical idea of artists being secluded and working as independent "geniuses," the class emphasized collaboration, a radical departure for the time period.

Feminist Art Movements: U.S and Europe

During the heyday of second wave feminism, women artists in New York began to come together for meetings and exhibitions. Collective galleries like A.I.R. Gallery were formed to provide visibility for art by feminist artists. The strength of the feminist movement allowed for emergence and visibility of many new types of work by women. Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) formed in 1969 to protest the lack of exposure for women artists. The Ad Hoc Women Artists' Committee (AWC) formed in 1971 to address the Whitney Museum's exclusion of women artists.

There are thousands of examples of women associated with the feminist art movement. Artists and writers credited with making the movement visible in culture include:

- Judy Chicago, founder of the first known Feminist Art Program
- Miriam Schapiro, co-founder of the Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts
- Sheila Levrant de Bretteville and Arlene Raven, co-founders of the Woman's Building

Both Suzanne Lacy and Faith Wilding were participants in all the early arts' programs. Other important names include Martha Rosler, Mary Kelly, Kate Millett, Nancy Spero, Faith Ringgold, June Wayne, Lucy Lippard, Griselda Pollock, and art-world agitators The Guerrilla Girls.

The Women's Interart Center in New York, meanwhile, is still in operation, while the Women's Video Festival was held in New York City for a number of years during the early 1970s. Many women artists continue to organize working groups, collectives, and nonprofit galleries in various locales around the world.

From 1980 onward, art historian Griselda Pollock challenged the dominant museum models of art and history so excluding of women's artistic contributions. She helped articulate the complex relations between femininity, modernity, psychoanalysis, and representation.

Current Climate

Things are beginning to shift in terms of a more gender-balanced art world as postmodern thought and gender politics become more important to the general public. Postmodern feminism is an approach to feminist theory that incorporates postmodern and post-structuralist theory, and thus sees itself as moving beyond the modernist polarities of liberal feminism and radical feminism towards a more intersectional concept of reality.

Site-Specific Art

Site-specific art refers to art that has been created for a specific environment or space.

Learning Objectives

Give examples of site-specific art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Site-specific art is artwork created to exist in a certain place. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork.

- The actual term was promoted and refined by Californian artist Robert Irwin, but it was actually first used in the mid-1970s by young sculptors such as Patricia Johanson, Dennis Oppenheim, and Athena Tacha.
- Outdoor site-specific artworks often include landscaping combined with permanently sculptural elements. Site-specific art can be linked with environmental art, Earth art, or land art.
- Robert Smithson and Christo and Jeanne Claude are land/Earth artists who created site-specific work.

Key Terms

- **topographies**: Detailed graphic representations of the surface features of a place or object.

Site-specific art is artwork created to exist in a certain place. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork. The actual term was promoted and refined by Californian artist Robert Irwin, but it was actually first used in the mid-1970s by young sculptors, such as Patricia Johanson, Dennis Oppenheim, and Athena Tacha, who executed public commissions for large urban sites. Architectural critic Catherine Howett and art critic Lucy Lippard were among the first to describe site-specific environmental art as a movement.

Site-specific installation by Dan Flavin, 1996, Menil Collection.: This site-specific installation by Dan Flavin uses colored lights to illuminate this interior gallery space.

Background

Site-specific art emerged as a reaction to the proliferation of modernist art objects as transportable, nomadic, museum-oriented, objects of commodification, with the desire to draw attention to the site and the context of the art. Site-specific work can refer to any form of art as long as it has been created for a specific environment or space. Closely related to land art and environmental art movements, site-specific art is the broadest of the three as it is not medium -specific.

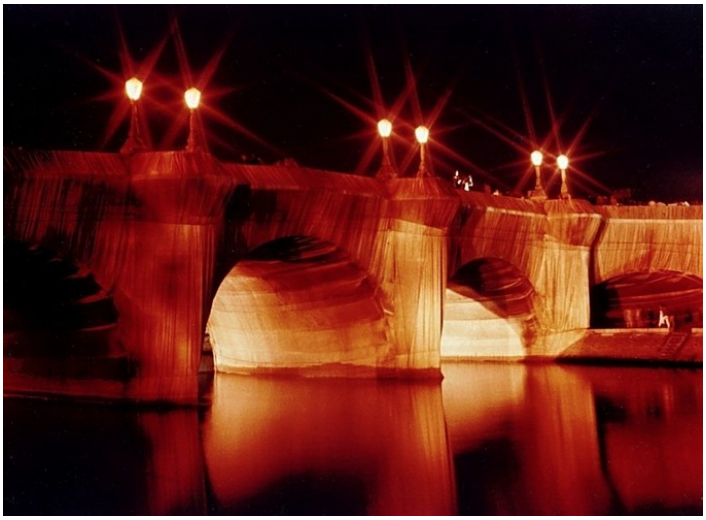
Land Art and Earth Art

Land art, earthworks (coined by Robert Smithson), or Earth art is an art movement in which landscape and of art are inextricably linked, so in this way it is site-specific. It is also an art form created in nature, using organic materials such as soil, rock (bed rock, boulders, stones), organic media (logs, branches, leaves), and water with introduced materials such as concrete, metal, asphalt, or mineral pigments. Sculptures are not placed in the landscape; rather, the landscape is the means of their creation. Earth-moving equipment is often involved. The works frequently exist in the open, located well away from civilization, left to change and erode under natural conditions. Many of the first works of this kind, created in the deserts of Nevada, New Mexico, Utah or Arizona, were ephemeral in nature and now only exist as video recordings or photographic documents.

Robert Smithson (January 2, 1938 – July 20, 1973) was an American land artist. His most famous work is *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a 1,500-foot long spiral-shaped jetty extending into the Great Salt Lake in Utah constructed from rocks, earth, and salt. It was entirely submerged by rising lake waters for several years, but has since re-emerged.

Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty: Spiral Jetty is a site specific piece of Land Art or Earth Art created by Robert Smithson in the Great Salt Lake, Utah. Using rocks and earth, Smithson built a spiral-shaped relief in the lake bed. Best viewed from above, the piece is altered by the shifting waters over time and in this way is forever linked to the environment it was intended for.

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude, known as Christo and Jeanne-Claude, are a married couple who created site-specific environmental works of art. Their works nearly always entail wrapping a large area of space or piece of architecture in a textile, and include the wrapping of the Reichstag in Berlin and the Pont-Neuf bridge in Paris, the 24-mile (39 km)-long artwork called *Running Fence* in Sonoma and Marin counties in California, and *The Gates* in New York City's Central Park. The purpose of their art, they contend, is simply to create works of art for joy and beauty and to create new ways of seeing familiar landscapes.



Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Pont Neuf, 1985: The artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude are known for their site-specific works that make use of large-scale wrapping techniques. In this piece, they wrapped an entire stone bridge built over a river in Paris to mesmerizing effect.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Conceptual art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- conceptualist. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/conceptualist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- dematerialization. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dematerialization. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ryu014dan-ji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ry%C5%8Dan-ji. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- Minimalism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ryu014dan-ji. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ry%C5%8Dan-ji. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Borrowed scenery. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Borrowed_scenery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Zen. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Zen. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- aesthetic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aesthetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ryoan-Ji temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji_MG_4512.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barcelona Pavilion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Barcelona_Pavilion.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Process Art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Process_Art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ephemeral. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ephemeral. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ryoan-Ji temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji_MG_4512.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barcelona Pavilion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Barcelona_Pavilion.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Humanneeddesire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Humanneeddesire.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Dematerialization. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Dematerialization%23Dematerialization_of_the_art_object. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Judy Chicago. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Judy_Chicago%23The_Dinner_Party. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Feminist art movement. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_art_movement. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- feminism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/feminism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Ryoan-Ji temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji_MG_4512.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barcelona Pavilion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Barcelona_Pavilion.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Humanneeddesire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Humanneeddesire.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Judy Chicago The Dinner Party. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Judy_Chicago_The_Dinner_Party.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Site-specific art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Site-specific_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- topographies. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/topographies. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Duchamp Fountaine. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Duchamp_Fountaine.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

- Ryoan-Ji temple. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji_MG_4512.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Barcelona Pavilion. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Barcelona_Pavilion.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Humanneeddesire. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Humanneeddesire.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Judy Chicago The Dinner Party. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Judy_Chicago_The_Dinner_Party.JPG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Spiral-jetty-from-rozel-point.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/8/84/Spiral-jetty-from-rozel-point.png. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Pont_Neuf_emballeu0301_par_Christo_1985.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/9/96/Pont_Neuf_emball%C3%A9_par_Christo_%281985%29.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Site-specific installation by Dan Flavin, 1996, Menil Collection, Houston Texas. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Site-specific_installation_by_Dan_Flavin,_1996,_Menil_Collection,_Houston_Texas.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 30.3: Dematerialization is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

30.4: Modern Architecture

Modern Architecture

Modern architecture is a term applied to an overarching movement, with various definitions and scopes.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of modern architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In a broad sense, early modern architecture began at the turn of the 20th century with efforts to reconcile the principles underlying architectural design with rapid technological advancement and the modernization of society.
- Modernism eventually generated reactions, most notably postmodernism which sought to preserve pre-modern elements, while neomodernism emerged as a reaction to postmodernism.
- Some believe modern architecture developed as a result of social and political revolutions. Others see modern architecture as primarily driven by technological and engineering developments.

Key Terms

- **ornament**: An element of decoration.
- **eclecticism**: Any form of art that borrows from multiple other styles.
- **modernism**: Any of several styles of art, architecture, literature, philosophy, etc., that flourished in the 20th century; characterized by formal purity, medium specificity, art for art's sake, experimentation, abstraction, a rejection of realism, and a revolutionary or reactionary tendency.

Modern architecture is a term applied to an overarching movement, with various definitions and scopes. In a broad sense, early modern architecture began at the turn of the 20^{th} century with efforts to reconcile the principles underlying architectural design with rapid technological advancement and the modernization of society. It would take the form of numerous movements, schools of design, and architectural styles, some in tension with one another, and often equally defying such classification.

Chicago Modernism: Contrasts in modern architecture, as shown by adjacent high-rises in Chicago, Illinois. IBM Plaza (right), by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, is a later example of the clean rectilinear lines and glass of the international style, whereas Marina City (left), by his student Bertrand Goldberg, reflects a more sculptural mid-century modern aesthetic.

The concept of modernism would be a central theme in these efforts. Gaining popularity after World War II, architectural modernism was adopted by many influential architects and architectural educators and continues as a dominant architectural style for institutional and corporate buildings into the 21st century. Modernism eventually generated reactions, most notably postmodernism which sought to preserve premodern elements, while neomodernism emerged as a reaction to postmodernism.

Notable architects important to the history and development of the modernist movement include Frank Lloyd Wright, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Oscar Niemeyer, and Alvar Aalto.

Early Modernism

The Crystal Palace, 1851, was one of the first buildings to have vast amounts of glass supported by structural metal, foreshadowing trends in modernist architecture.

There are multiple lenses through which the evolution of modern architecture may be viewed. Some historians see it as a social matter, closely tied to the project of modernity and thus the Enlightenment. Modern architecture developed, in their opinion, as a result of social and political revolutions. Others see Modern architecture as primarily driven by technological and engineering developments. Still other historians regard Modernism as a matter of taste, a reaction against eclecticism and the lavish stylistic excesses of Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

Frank Gehry

Frank Owen Gehry (born Frank Owen Goldberg; 28 February 1929) is a Canadian-born American architect residing in Los Angeles. Gehry's best-known works are world-renowned and include the titanium-clad Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain; Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles; Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, France; MIT Ray and Maria Stata Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Vontz Center for Molecular Studies on the University of Cincinnati campus; Experience Music Project in Seattle; New World Center in Miami Beach; Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis; Dancing House in Prague; the Vitra Design Museum and the museum MARTa Herford in Germany; the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto; the Cinémathèque française in Paris; and 8 Spruce Street in New York City.

Frank Gehry, Bilbao Guggenheim, 1997: The Bilbao Guggenheim exemplifies Gehry's interest in structural experimentation and grand spaces.

Much of Gehry's work reflects a spirit of experimentation coupled with a respect for the demands of professional practice. With his earliest educational influences rooted in modernism, Gehry's work has sought to escape modernist stylistic tropes while still remaining interested in some of its underlying transformative agendas. Continually working between given circumstances and unanticipated materializations, Gehry's style works to disrupt expectations.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (March 27, 1886 – August 17, 1969) was a German-American architect. Along with Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Frank Lloyd Wright, he is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of modern architecture.

Mies, like many of his post-World War I contemporaries, sought to establish a new architectural style that could represent modern times just as classical and gothic did for their eras. He created an influential 20th-century architectural style with extreme clarity and simplicity. His mature buildings made use of modern materials such as industrial steel and plate glass to define interior spaces. He strove toward architecture with a minimal framework of structural order balanced against the implied freedom of unobstructed free-flowing open space. He called his buildings "skin and bones" architecture. He sought an objective approach that would guide the creative process of architectural design, but he was always concerned with expressing the spirit of the modern era. He is often associated with his quotation of the aphorisms "less is more" and "God is in the details".

Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright (born Frank Lincoln Wright, June 8, 1867 – April 9, 1959) was an American architect, interior designer, writer, and educator, who designed more than 1,000 structures, 532 of which were completed. Wright believed in designing structures that were in harmony with humanity and its environment, a philosophy he called organic architecture. This philosophy was best exemplified by Fallingwater (1935), which has been called “the best all-time work of American architecture”. Wright was a leader of the Prairie School movement of architecture and developed the concept of the Usonian home, his unique vision for urban planning in the United States. His creative period spanned more than 70 years.

Frank Lloyd Wright, Fallingwater, 1936-39: Fallingwater stands as one of Wright’s greatest masterpieces, both for its dynamism and for its integration with the striking natural surroundings. It serves as a perfect example of his “organic” philosophy, whereby structures were designed in harmony with humanity and its environment.

Wright’s work includes original and innovative examples of many building types, including offices, churches, schools, skyscrapers, hotels, and museums. Wright also designed many of the interior elements of his buildings, such as the furniture and stained glass. Wright wrote 20 books and many articles and was a popular lecturer in the United States and in Europe. His colorful personal life often made headlines, most notably for the 1914 fire and murders at his Taliesin studio. Already well known during his lifetime, Wright was recognized in 1991 by the American Institute of Architects as “the greatest American architect of all time”.

In the United States

Wright’s Larkin Building (1904) in Buffalo, New York, Unity Temple (1905) in Oak Park, Illinois, and the Robie House (1910) in Chicago, Illinois were some of the first examples of modern architecture in the United States. Frank Lloyd Wright was a major influence on European architects, including both Walter Gropius (founder of the Bauhaus) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, as well as on the whole of organic architecture.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Modern architecture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- modernism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/modernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- ornament. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ornament. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- eclecticism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/eclecticism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bilbao_-_Guggenheim_aurore.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/c/c7/Bilbao_-_Guggenheim_aurore.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Fallingwater_-_DSC05639.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/0/08/Fallingwater_-_DSC05639.JPG. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- 2006-06-05 1580x2900 chicago modernism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2006-06-05_1580x2900_chicago_modernism.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

This page titled 30.4: Modern Architecture is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

30.5: Postmodernism

Race and Ethnicity in Postmodernism

Postmodernism had a profound influence on the concepts of race and ethnicity in the United States in the mid-20th century.

Learning Objectives

Describe the influence of postmodernism on the concept of race in the United States

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, arguing that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative rather than certain or universal.
- A great deal of art during this era sought to deconstruct race through a postmodern lens, arguing that race is not based in any biological reality but is instead a socially constructed category.
- Primarily through a postmodern perspective, the author bell hooks has addressed the intersection of race, class, and gender in education, art, history, sexuality, mass media, and feminism.
- The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s led artists to express the ideals of the times. Galleries and community art centers were developed for the purpose of displaying African-American art, and collegiate teaching positions were created by and for African-American artists.
- By the 1980s and 1990s, hip-hop graffiti became predominate in urban communities. Most major cities developed museums devoted to African American artists. The National Endowment for the Arts provided increasing support for these artists.
- Post-black art is a phrase that refers to a category of contemporary African-American art. It is a paradoxical genre in which race and racism are intertwined in a way that rejects their interaction.

Key Terms

- **bell hooks**: Born Gloria Jean Watkins (1952 –); an American author, feminist, and social activist; known for her focus on the interconnectivity of race, capitalism, and gender and their ability to perpetuate systems of oppression.
- **deconstruction**: A philosophical theory of textual criticism; a form of critical analysis.
- **post-structuralism**: A doctrine that rejects structuralism's claims to objectivity and emphasizes the plurality of meaning.

Background

Postmodernism (also known as post-structuralism) is skeptical of explanations that claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person (i.e. postmodernism = relativism). In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only exists through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, arguing that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative rather than certain or universal.

Postmodernism frequently serves as an ambiguous, overarching term for skeptical interpretations of culture, literature, art, philosophy, economics, architecture, fiction, and literary criticism. It is often associated with deconstruction and post-structuralism because its usage gained significant popularity at the same time as 20th-century post-structural thought.

Postmodernism postulates that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs and therefore subject to change. It claims that there is no absolute truth and that the way people perceive the world is subjective and emphasizes the role of language, power relations, and motivations in the formation of ideas and beliefs. In particular, it attacks the use of binary classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial; it holds realities to be plural, relative, and dependent on who the interested parties are and the nature of these interests. Postmodernist approaches consider that the ways in which social dynamics, such as power and hierarchy, affect human conceptualizations of the world have important effects on the way knowledge is constructed and used. Postmodernist thought often emphasizes constructivism, idealism, pluralism, relativism, and skepticism in its approaches to knowledge and understanding.

Postmodernism and Race

Postmodernism had a profound influence on the concepts of race and ethnicity in the United States in the mid-20th century. Many people began to reconceptualize the term “race” as a social construct – meaning that it has no inherent biological reality, but is a classification system that’s been constructed or invented for societal purposes. Following the Second World War, evolutionary and social scientists were acutely aware of how beliefs about race were used to justify discrimination, apartheid, slavery, and genocide. This questioning gained momentum in the 1960s during the U.S. civil rights movement and the emergence of numerous anti-colonial movements worldwide.

A great deal of art during this era sought to deconstruct race through a postmodern lens. The author bell hooks is widely known for her writing focused on the connection of race, capitalism, and gender and what she describes as their ability to produce and perpetuate systems of oppression and class domination. She has published more than 30 books and numerous scholarly and mainstream articles, appeared in several documentary films, and participated in various public lectures. Primarily through a postmodern perspective, hooks has addressed race, class, and gender in education, art, history, sexuality, mass media, and feminism.

bell hooks: The author bell hooks is widely known for her postmodern writing focused on the connection of race, capitalism, and gender.

Some African-American artists began taking a global approach after World War II. Artists such as Barbara Chase-Riboud, Edward Clark, Harvey Cropper, and Beauford Delaney worked and exhibited abroad in Paris, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. Other African-American artists made it into important New York galleries by the 1950s and 1960s: Horace Pippin and Romare Bearden were among the few who were successfully received in a gallery setting. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s led artists to capture and express the times and changes. Galleries and community art centers were developed for the purpose of displaying African-American art, and collegiate teaching positions were created by and for African-American artists.

E.J. Martin 1990: Midnight Golfer by Eugene J. Martin, mixed media collage on rag paper.

Post-black art arose during this time as a category of contemporary African-American art. It is a paradoxical genre of art where race and racism are intertwined in a way that rejects their interaction. By the 1980s and 1990s, hip-hop graffiti became predominate in urban communities. Most major cities had developed museums devoted to African American artists. The National Endowment for the Arts provided increasing support for these artists.

Postmodernist Sculpture

The characteristics of postmodernism, such as collage, pastiche, appropriation, and the destruction of barriers between fine art and popular culture, can be applied to sculptural works.

Learning Objectives

Discuss postmodern sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While inherently difficult to define by nature, postmodernism began with pop art and continued within many following movements including conceptual art, neo-expressionism, feminist art, and the young British artists of the 1990s.
- Intermedia, installation art, conceptual art, video, light art, and sound art are often regarded as postmodern mediums.
- In the 1960s and 1970s artists like Eduardo Paolozzi, Chryssa, Claes Oldenburg, George Segal, Edward Kienholz, Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, Duane Hanson, and John DeAndrea explored abstraction, imagery, and figure by using video art, environment, light sculpture, and installation art in new ways.
- Jeff Koons is a good example of a postmodern sculptor; his works elevate the mundane, contain a heavy dose of kitsch, and project an element of ambiguous cynicism often seen in postmodern works.

Key Terms

- **postminimalist**: One who works in the style of postminimalism.
- **kinetic**: Of or relating to motion.

Background

The characteristics of postmodernism, include bricolage, collage, appropriation, the recycling of past styles and themes in a modern-day context, and destruction of the barriers between fine arts, craft and popular culture, can be applied to sculpture. While

inherently difficult to define by nature, postmodernism began with pop art and continued within many following movements including conceptual art, neo-expressionism, feminist art, and the young British artists of the 1990s. The plurality of idea and form that defines postmodernism essentially allow any medium to be considered postmodern. In terms of sculpture, characteristics like mixed media, installation art, conceptual art, video light art, and sound art are often regarded as postmodern.

Pop Art

The pop art movement emerged in the mid-1950s in Britain and the late 1950s in the United States. Among the early artists that shaped the pop art movement were Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton in Britain and Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in the United States. Pop art presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including imagery from popular culture such as advertising and news.

Typewriter Eraser by Claes Oldenburg, 1999: Claes Oldenburg is known for memorializing everyday objects in his works, challenging the idea that public monuments must commemorate historical figures or events.

Jeff Koons

Jeffrey “Jeff” Koons (born January 21, 1955) is an American artist known for working with popular culture subjects and reproducing banal objects, such as balloon animals produced in stainless steel with mirror-finish surfaces. His works have sold for substantial sums, including at least one world record auction price for a work by a living artist.

Koons gained recognition in the 1980s and subsequently set up a factory-like studio in a SoHo loft on the corner of Houston Street and Broadway in New York. It was staffed with over 30 assistants, each assigned to a different aspect of producing his work, in a similar mode as Andy Warhol’s Factory (notable because all of his work is produced using a method known as art fabrication). Today, he has a 16,000-square-foot factory near the old Hudson rail yards in Chelsea, working with 90 to 120 regular assistants. Koons developed a color-by-numbers system so that each of his assistants could execute his canvases and sculptures as if they had been done “by a single hand”.

Balloon Dog (Magenta), Jeff Koons, 1994–2000: One of five unique versions (Blue, Magenta, Orange, Red, Yellow). Made from mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating, the Orange version was sold in 2013 for a record price for a living sculptor.

Koons is a good example of a postmodern sculptor because his works elevate the mundane, contain a heavy dose of kitsch, and project an element of ambiguous cynicism often seen in postmodern works.

The “Puppy” topiary sculpture by Jeff Koons, on the outdoor terrace at Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain.: Koons’ “Puppy” presents a large scale puppy on the terrace of the Guggenheim, Bilbao.

Neo-Expressionism

Neo-expressionists sought to portray recognizable subjects in rough and violently emotional ways using vivid color schemes.

Learning Objectives

Critique the controversies around neo-expressionism related to marketability, celebrity, feminism, and intellectualism.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Related to American lyrical abstraction, the Bay Area Figurative School, the continuation of abstract expressionism, new image painting, and pop art, neo-expressionism developed as a reaction against the conceptual art and minimal art of the 1970s.
- Critics questioned neo-expressionism’s relation to marketability, the rapidly expanding art market, celebrity, the backlash against feminism, anti-intellectualism, and a return to mythic subjects and individualist methods that some deemed outmoded.
- Women were marginalized by the movement, with painters such as Elizabeth Murray and Maria Lassnig omitted from many key exhibitions.
- The return to traditional painting in the late 1970s and early 1980s seen in neo-expressionist artists such as Georg Baselitz and Julian Schnabel is described as having had postmodern tendencies.
- Neo-expressionism’s strong links to the commercial art market has raised questions about its status as a postmodern movement and about the definition of postmodernism itself.

Key Terms

- **outmoded**: Something that is considered unfashionable.
- **neo-expressionism**: A style of modern painting and sculpture that emerged in the late 1970s and dominated the art market until the mid-1980s; characterized by portraying recognizable objects like the human body in rough and violently emotional ways using vivid color schemes.
- **bay**: An opening in a wall, especially between two columns; the distance between two supports in a vault or building with a pitched roof.

Background

Neo-expressionism is a style of modern painting and sculpture that emerged in the late 1970s and dominated the art market until the mid-1980s. Related to American lyrical abstraction of the 60s and 70s, the Bay Area Figurative School of the 50s and 60s, the continuation of abstract expressionism, new image painting, and pop art, neo-expressionism developed as a reaction against the conceptual and minimalist art of the 1970s. Neo-expressionists returned to portraying recognizable objects such as the human body (though sometimes an abstracted version), in rough and violently emotional ways using vivid colors and color harmonies.

Overtly inspired by so-called German expressionist painters such as Emil Nolde, Max Beckmann, George Grosz, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and other expressionist artists such as James Ensor and Edvard Munch, neo-expressionists were sometimes called Neue Wilden ("the new wild ones'"). The style emerged internationally and was viewed by critics as a revival of traditional themes of self-expression in European art after decades of American dominance.

The social and economic value of the movement was hotly debated. Critics questioned neo-expressionism's relation to marketability, the rapidly expanding art market, celebrity, the backlash against feminism, anti-intellectualism, and a return to mythic subjects and individualist methods that some deemed outmoded. Women were marginalized in the movement, with painters such as Elizabeth Murray and Maria Lassnig omitted from many of its key exhibitions, most notoriously from the 1981 "New Spirit in Painting" exhibition in London that included 38 male painters and no female painters.

Elizabeth Murray, *Wiggle Manhattan*, lithograph, 1992: Elizabeth Murray is an example of a Neo-Expressionist painter who was marginalized in the movement due to her gender.

Neo-Expressionism Around the World

Georg Baselitz, born January 1938, is a German painter who studied in the former East Germany before moving to West Germany. Baselitz's style is interpreted as neo-expressionist, but from a European perspective it is seen as postmodern. His career was amplified in the 1960s after the police took action against one of his paintings because of its provocative and offensive sexual nature.

Georg Baselitz by Lothar Wolleh (Mülheim, 1971): Georg Baselitz's paintings are representative of neo-expressionism.

Ida Applebroog is a notable American painter whose work is included in many public collections in the United States. During the 1990s, she received multiple honors, including the College Art Association Distinguished Art Award for Lifetime Achievement and an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the New School for Social Research/Parsons School of Design.

Neo-Expressionism As Postmodern Art?

The return to traditional painting in the late 1970s and early 1980s seen in neo-expressionist artists such as Georg Baselitz and Julian Schnabel has been described as one of the first coherent postmodern movements. Its strong link to the commercial art market has raised questions about its status as a postmodern movement and about the definition of postmodernism itself. Hal Foster stated that Neo-Expressionism was complicit with the conservative cultural politics of the Reagan-Bush era in the U.S. Félix Guattari disregarded the "large promotional operations dubbed 'Neo-Expressionism' in Germany" as an example of a "fad that maintains itself by means of publicity…postmodernism is nothing but the last gasp of modernism. "

These critiques of Neo-Expressionism reveal that money and public relations strained the credibility of the contemporary art world in America during the same period that conceptual artists and women artists including painters and feminist theorists like Griselda Pollock were systematically reevaluating modern art. Brian Massumi claims that Deleuze and Guattari opened the horizon for new definitions of beauty in postmodern art. For Jean-François Lyotard, paintings by Valerio Adami, Daniel Buren, Marcel Duchamp, Bracha Ettinger, and Barnett Newman, and the painting of Paul Cézanne and Wassily Kandinsky, were the vehicles for new ideas of the sublime in contemporary art.

Political Art

Political art in the nineties was a form of protest for queer and feminist movements against the patriarchy.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how personal revelation through art was used as a political tool throughout the 1990s

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The 90s saw a continuation of political art whereby stigmatized communities such as racial minorities, women, and LGBT individuals created what is termed political art in opposition to the patriarchy.
- The Guerrilla Girls are an anonymous group of feminist, female artists devoted to fighting sexism and racism within the art world.
- The LGBT community responded to the AIDS crisis by organizing, engaging in direct actions, staging protests, and creating political art.

- Street art can be a powerful platform for reaching the public and a potent form of political expression for the oppressed.

Key Terms

- **feminism**: A social theory or political movement supporting the equality of both sexes in all aspects of public and private life; specifically, a theory or movement that argues that legal and social restrictions on females must be removed in order to bring about such equality.

Background

A strong relationship between the arts and politics has existed across cultural boundaries and throughout history. Artistic responses to contemporaneous events take on political and social dimensions, becoming a focus of controversy and even a force of political and social change. The 1990s saw a continuation of political art around the world. Stigmatized communities such as racial minorities, women, and the LGBT individuals created political art in opposition to the patriarchy.

The notion that personal revelation through art can be a political tool guided activist art in its study of public dimensions and private experience. The strategies deployed by feminist artists paralleled those of other activist artists, including "collaboration, dialogue, a constant questioning of aesthetic and social assumptions, and a new respect for audience." These were used to articulate and negotiate issues of self-representation, empowerment, and community identity.

The Guerrilla Girls

The Guerrilla Girls are an anonymous group of feminist, female artists devoted to fighting sexism and racism within the art world. The group formed in New York City in 1985 with the mission of bringing gender and racial inequality in the fine arts into focus within the greater community. Members are known for the gorilla masks they wear to remain anonymous.

Throughout their existence, the Guerrilla Girls have utilized protest art to express their ideals, opinions, and concerns, as well as to fundraise for the group. Their posters, which now are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and others they once protested against, are known for their bold statements such as, "When racism and sexism are no longer fashionable, what will your art collection be worth?" In the early days, posters were brainstormed, designed, critiqued and posted around New York. Small handbills based on their designs were also passed out at events by the thousands.

Guerrilla Girls Billboard: Guerrilla Girls billboard in Los Angeles protests white male dominance at the Oscars in 2009.

In 1990, the group designed a billboard featuring Mona Lisa that was placed along the West Side Highway, supported by the New York City public art fund. For one day, New York's MTA Bus Company also displayed bus advertisements asking, "Do women have to get naked to get into the Met Museum?" Stickers also became popular calling cards representative of the group. In the mid-1980s members infiltrated the Guggenheim Museum bathrooms and placed stickers about female inequality on the walls.

Since 2002, Guerrilla Girls, Inc. has designed and installed billboards in Los Angeles during the Oscars to expose white male dominance in the film industry, such as: “Anatomically Correct Oscars,” “Even the Senate is More Progressive than Hollywood,” and “The Birth of Feminism, Unchain the Women Directors. ” Guerrilla Girls have also published books that include their statistical data, information about protest arts, and goals regarding inequality in the art world. Their first book, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls*

LGBT Rights and the AIDS Crisis

The AIDS crisis of the 1980s led to increasing stigma against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, who in turn protested with political art and activism.

The LGBT community responded to the AIDS crisis by organizing, engaging in direct actions, staging protests, and creating political art. Some of the earliest attempts to bring attention to the new disease were staged by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a protest and street performance organization that uses drag and religious imagery to call attention to sexual intolerance and satirize issues of gender and morality. At the group’s inception in 1979, a small group of gay men in San Francisco began wearing the attire of nuns in visible situations, using high camp to draw attention to social conflicts and problems in the Castro District.

One of their most enduring projects of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence is the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, in which members who have died (referred to as “Nuns of the Above”) are immortalized. Created in the early 1990s, the quilt has frequently been flown around the United States for local displays.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt: The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, often abbreviated to AIDS Memorial Quilt, is an enormous quilt made as a memorial to celebrate the lives of people who have died of AIDS-related causes. Weighing an estimated 54 tons, it is the largest piece of community folk art in the world as of 2016.

Street Art

Street art is an umbrella term defining forms of visual art created in public locations, usually unsanctioned artwork executed outside of the context of traditional art venues. The term gained popularity during the graffiti art boom of the early 1980s. The terms “urban art”, “guerrilla art”, “post-graffiti” and “neo-graffiti” are also sometimes used when referring to artwork created in these contexts.

There is a strong current of activism and subversion in urban art, as it can be a powerful platform for reaching the public and a potent form of political expression for the oppressed. Some street artists use “smart vandalism” as a way to raise awareness of social and political issues, especially around issues of race and racism. Street artists sometimes present socially relevant content infused with aesthetic value to attract attention to a cause or as a form of “art provocation.” Street art is a controversial issue: some people consider it a crime, others consider it a form of art.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- African American art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Postmodernism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Post-black art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-black_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bell hooks. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_hooks. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Race (classification of human beings). **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_(classification_of_human_beings)%23Modern_debate. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Postmodernism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism%23Influence_on_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Race and society. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_and_society. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- deconstruction. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/deconstruction. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Boundless. **Provided by**: Boundless Learning. **Located at**: www.boundless.com//art-history/definition/bell-hooks. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- post-structuralism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/post-structuralism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bellhooks. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bellhooks.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- E.J.Martin.1990. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:E.J.Martin.1990.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jeff Koons. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Sculpture. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculpture%23Minimalism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- kinetic. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/kinetic. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- postminimalist. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/postminimalist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bellhooks. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bellhooks.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- E.J.Martin.1990. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:E.J.Martin.1990.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Typewriter-eraser.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Typewriter_Eraser,_Scale_X. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jeff_Koons_-_Balloon_Dog_Magenta.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons#/media/File:Jeff_Koons_-_Balloon_Dog_(Magenta).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- A_Bibao_-_Puppy_-_de_Jeff_Koons.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons#/media/File:A_Bibao_-_Puppy_-_de_Jeff_Koons.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Georg Baselitz. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Baselitz. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Neo-expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- German Expressionist. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Expressionist. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Ida Applebroog. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida_Applebroog. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- bay. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bay. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- outmoded. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/outmoded. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- neo-expressionism. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/neo-expressionism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bellhooks. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bellhooks.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- E.J.Martin.1990. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:E.J.Martin.1990.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Typewriter-eraser.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Typewriter_Eraser,_Scale_X. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jeff_Koons_-_Balloon_Dog_Magenta.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons#/media/File:Jeff_Koons_-_Balloon_Dog_(Magenta).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- A_Bibao_-_Puppy_-_de_Jeff_Koons.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons#/media/File:A_Bibao_-_Puppy_-_de_Jeff_Koons.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Manhattanwiggle.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/2/22/Manhattanwiggle.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Georg Baselitz by Lothar Wolleh. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georg_Baselitz_by_Lothar_Wolleh.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Protest art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Protest_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Guerrilla Girls. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_Girls. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- feminism. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/feminism. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Bellhooks. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bellhooks.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- E.J.Martin.1990. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:E.J.Martin.1990.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Typewriter-eraser.JPG. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Typewriter_Eraser,_Scale_X. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Jeff_Koons_-_Balloon_Dog_Magenta.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons#/media/File:Jeff_Koons_-_Balloon_Dog_(Magenta).jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- A_Bibao_-_Puppy_-_de_Jeff_Koons.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Koons#/media/File:A_Bibao_-_Puppy_-_de_Jeff_Koons.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Manhattanwiggle.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/2/22/Manhattanwiggle.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Georg Baselitz by Lothar Wolleh. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Georg_Baselitz_by_Lothar_Wolleh.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Aids_Quilt.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/b/b4/Aids_Quilt.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Guerrilla Girls Billboard. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Guerrilla_Girls_Billboard.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

This page titled 30.5: Postmodernism is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

30.6: New Media for Art

New Media for Art

Performance and conceptual art challenge the notion of visual art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss conceptual and performance art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Conceptual art emerged as a movement during the 1960s. In part, it was a reaction against formalism as articulated by the influential New York art critic Clement Greenberg.
- Some have argued that conceptual art continued this dematerialization of art by removing the need for objects altogether, while others, including many of the artists themselves, saw conceptual art as a radical break with Greenberg's kind of formalist modernism.
- Performance art is traditionally an interdisciplinary performance presented to an audience. It may be scripted or unscripted, random or carefully orchestrated, spontaneous or planned, and occur with or without audience participation.

Key Terms

- **conceptual**: Of, or relating to concepts or mental conception; existing in the imagination.

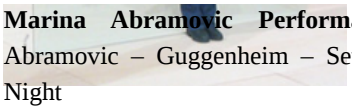
Background

Conceptual art emerged as a movement during the 1960s. In part, it was a reaction against formalism as articulated by influential New York art critic Clement Greenberg. According to Greenberg, modern art followed a process of progressive reduction and refinement toward the goal of defining the essential, formal nature of each medium. Elements that ran counter to this nature were to be reduced.

The task of painting, for example, was to define precisely what kind of object a painting truly is: what makes it a painting and nothing else? The nature of a painting is a flat canvas object onto which colored pigment is applied. Elements such things as figuration, 3-D perspective illusion, and references to external subject matter were considered extraneous to the essence of painting and thus removed.

Some have argued that conceptual art continued this dematerialization of art by removing the need for objects altogether, while others, including many of the artists themselves, saw conceptual art as a radical break from Greenberg's kind of formalist modernism. Later artists continued to share a preference for self-critical art as well as a distaste for illusion. However, by the end of the 1960s, it was clear that Greenberg's stipulations for art no longer held traction.

Performance art is a traditionally interdisciplinary performance presented to an audience. It may be scripted or unscripted, random or carefully orchestrated, spontaneous or otherwise planned, and occur with or without audience participation. The performance can be live or distributed via media; the performer can be present or absent. Any situation that involves the four basic elements of time, space, the performer's body or presence in a medium, and a relationship between the performer and the audience can be considered performance art. It can happen anywhere, in any venue or setting, and for any length of time.



Marina Abramovic Performance Artist: Marina Abramovic – Guggenheim – Seven Easy Pieces – 1st Night

Contemporary Influence In Conceptual Art

The first wave of the conceptual art movement extended from approximately 1967 to 1978, influenced by early concept artists like Henry Flynt, Robert Morris, and Ray Johnson. Conceptual artists like Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, and Lawrence Weiner have proven very influential on subsequent artists, and well-known contemporary artists such as Mike Kelley or Tracey Emin are sometimes labeled “second- or third-generation” conceptualists, or post-conceptual artists.

Contemporary artists have adopted many of the concerns of the conceptual art movement. While these artists may or may not identify themselves as conceptual artists, ideas such as anti-commodification, social and political critique, and ideas/information as medium continue to have a place in contemporary art, especially among artists working with installation art, performance art, net art, and digital art.

Visual Arts, Performing Arts, and Art Performance

Performance art is an essentially contested concept: any single definition implies the recognition of rival uses. Like concepts such as”democracy” or “art,” it implies productive disagreement with itself.

The narrower meaning of the term refers to postmodernist traditions in Western culture. From about the mid-1960s into the 1970s, performance art often derived from concepts of visual art, with respect to Antonin Artaud, Dada, the Situationists, Fluxus, installation art, and conceptual Art. It was often defined as the antithesis to theatre, challenging orthodox art forms and cultural norms. The ideal was an ephemeral and authentic experience for the performer and audience in an event that could not be repeated, captured, or purchased.

Performance artists often challenge the audience to think in new and unconventional ways, break conventions of traditional arts, and break down conventional ideas about “what art is.” As long as the performer does not become a player who repeats a role, performance art can include satirical elements (compare Blue Man Group); utilize robots and machines as performers, as in pieces of the Survival Research Laboratories; or borrow elements of any performing arts such as dance, music, and circus.

Digital Art

Digital art describes artistic works and practices that use digital technology as a part of the creative process.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate how advances in technology have given rise to multiple digital art forms

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Since the 1970s, digital art has been described with terms like computer art and multimedia art. This modality falls under the umbrella of new media art.
- The impact of digital technology has transformed activities such as painting, drawing, sculpture, and music, while new forms, such as net art, digital installation art, and virtual reality, have become recognized as art.
- The techniques of digital art are used extensively by the mainstream media in advertisements and by filmmakers to produce special effects.
- Digital art can be purely computer-generated or taken from other sources, such as a scanned photograph or an image drawn using graphics software.

Key Terms

- **imagery**: Visible representations of objects.
- **stylus**: A sharp stick used in ancient times for writing in clay tablets; a sharp tool for engraving.

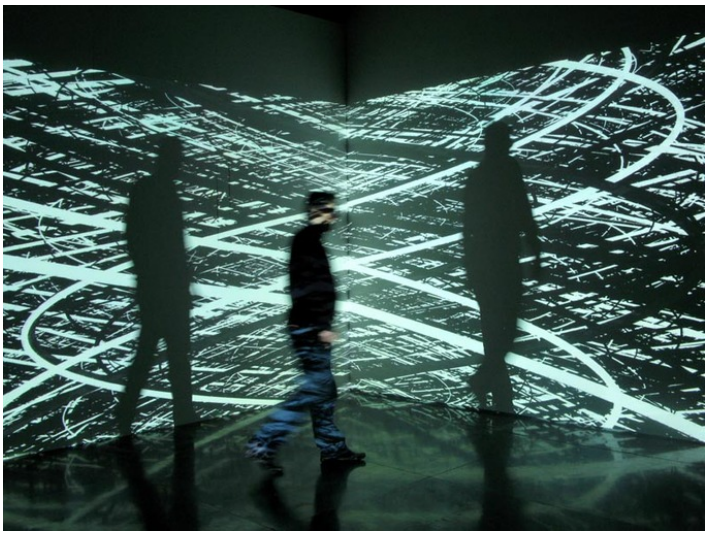
Digital art is a general term for any art that uses digital technology as an essential part of the creative process. Since the 1970s, various names have been used to describe such artwork, including computer art and multimedia art, and digital art itself is placed under the larger umbrella term of new media art.

The impact of digital technology has transformed activities such as painting, drawing, sculpture, and music, while new forms (such as net art, digital installation art, and virtual reality) have become recognized as art. More generally, the term digital artist describes one who creates art using digital technologies. The term digital art is also applied to contemporary art that uses the methods of mass production or digital media.

Digital Production Techniques in Visual Media

Techniques of digital art are used extensively by the mainstream media in advertisements and by filmmakers to produce special effects. Both digital and traditional artists use many sources of electronic information and programs to create their work. Given the parallels between visual art and music, it seems likely that acceptance of the value of digital art parallel the progression to acceptance of electronic music over the last four decades.

Digital art can be purely computer-generated or taken from other sources, such as scanned photographs or images drawn using graphics software. The term may technically be applied to art done using other media or processes and merely scanned into a digital format, but digital art usually describes art that has been significantly modified by a computer program. Digitized text, raw audio, and video recordings are usually not considered digital art alone, but can be part of larger digital art projects. Digital painting is created in a similar fashion to non-digital painting uses software to create and distribute the work.

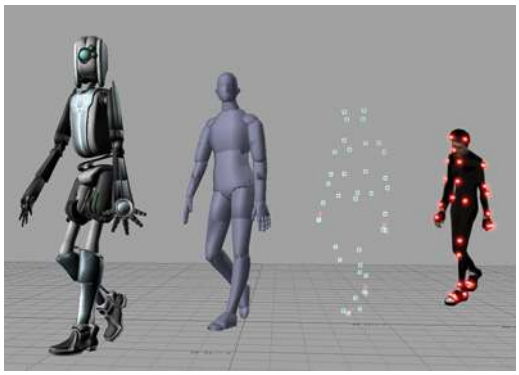


Irrational Geometrics, Pascal Dombis (2008): Irrational Geometrics is a digital art installation.

Computer-Generated Visual Media

Digital visual art consists of two-dimensional (2D) information displayed on a monitor as well as information mathematically translated into three-dimensional (3D) images and viewed through perspective projection on a monitor. The simplest form is 2D computer graphics, which reflect drawings made using a pencil and paper. In this case, however, the image is on the computer screen and the instrument used to draw might be a stylus or mouse. The creation might appear to be drawn with a pencil, pen, or paintbrush.

Another kind of digital video art is 3D computer graphics, where the screen becomes a window into a virtual environment of arranged objects that are “photographed” by the computer. Many software programs enable collaboration, lending such artwork to sharing and augmentation so users can collaborate on an artistic creation. Computer-generated animations are created with a computer from digital models. The term is usually applied to works created entirely with a computer. Movies make heavy use of computer-generated graphics, which are called computer-generated imagery (CGI) in the film industry.



Computer-generated animation: This example of computer-generated animation, produced using the “motion capture” technique, is another form of digital art.

Digital installation art constitutes a broad field of activity and incorporates many forms. Some resemble video installations, particularly large-scale works involving projections and live video capture. By using projection techniques that enhance an audience’s impression of sensory development, many digital installations attempt to create immersive environments.

Jeff Wall, A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai), 1993: The well-known photographer Jeff Wall often uses digital photography to create his works, thereby classifying them as a form of digital art that exemplifies the exceptionally wide-reaching nature of the term itself.

Video Art

Video art relies on moving pictures and is comprised of video and/or audio data.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the history and current use of video art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Video art came into existence during the late 1960s and early 1970s as new technology became available outside corporate broadcasting.
- This form can consist of recordings that are broadcast, viewed in galleries, or distributed as video tapes or DVD discs; sculptural installations incorporating one or more television sets or video monitors; and performances in which video representations are included.
- Many artists found video more appealing than film, particularly when the medium ‘s greater accessibility was coupled with technologies able to edit or modify the video image.
- Installation works involve either an environment, distinct pieces of video presented separately, or any combination of video with traditional media like sculpture.

Key Terms

- **choreography**: The art of creating, arranging, and recording dance movements.
- **video art**: A type of art relying on moving pictures and comprising of video and/or audio data. Video art came into existence during the late 1960s and early 1970s as the new technology became available outside corporate broadcasting.

Video art came into existence during the late 1960s and early 1970s as new technology became available outside corporate broadcasting for the production of moving image work. The medium of video being used to create the work, which can then be broadcast, viewed in galleries, distributed as video tapes or DVD discs, or presented as sculptural installations incorporating one or more television sets or video monitors.

History of Video Art

Prior to the introduction of this new technology, moving image production was only available to the consumer through 8 or 16 millimeter film. Many artists found video more appealing than film, particularly when the medium's greater accessibility was coupled with technologies able to edit or modify the video image. The relative affordability of video also led to its popularity as a medium.

The Art of Video Games Exhibition Crowd, March 16, 2012 – September 30, 2012: Exhibit at the Smithsonian American Art Museum that showcased video games as moving image art works.

The first multi-channel video art was Wipe Cycle by Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette. An installation of nine television screens, Wipe Cycle combined live images of gallery visitors, found footage from commercial television, and shots from pre-recorded tapes. The material was alternated from one monitor to the next in an elaborate choreography.

Prominent Video Artists

Many early prominent video artists were involved with concurrent movements in conceptual art, performance, and experimental film. These include Americans Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, and Peter Campus, among others. Some, like Steina and Woody Vasulka, employed video synthesizers to create abstract works.

Much video art in the medium's heyday experimented formally with the limitations of the format. For example, American artist Peter Campus' *Double Vision* combined the video signals from two Sony Portapaks through an electronic mixer, resulting in a distorted and radically dissonant image. Another representative piece, Joan Jonas' *Vertical Roll*, involved recording previously-recorded material of Jonas dancing while playing the videos back on a television, resulting in a layered and complex representation of mediation.

Joan Jonas, Vertical Roll, 1972: A still from Vertical Roll by Joan Jonas, a video that experiments with the formal limitations of video as a medium.

Video Art Today

Currently, video art is represented by two varieties: single-channel and installation. Single-channel works are much closer to the conventional idea of television in that a video is screened, projected, or shown as a single image. Installation works, meanwhile, involve either an environment, distinct pieces of video presented separately, or any combination of video coupled with traditional media like sculpture. Installation video is the most common form of video art today. Sometimes it is combined with other media and is often subsumed by the greater whole of an installation. Contemporary contributions are being produced at the crossroads of such disciplines as installation, architecture, design, sculpture, and electronic art.

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Curation and Revision. **Provided by**: Boundless.com. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

CC licensed content, Specific attribution

- Conceptual art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Performance art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Performance_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- conceptual. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/conceptual. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marina 1 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Marina_1_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Digital art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- imagery. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/imagery. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- stylus. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stylus. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marina 1 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Marina_1_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Activemarker2.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/6/6d/Activemarker2.PNG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dombis 1687. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dombis_1687.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jeffwall070305_560.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/0/03/Jeffwall070305_560.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Video art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Video art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

- video art. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/video%20art. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- choreography. **Provided by**: Wiktionary. **Located at**: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/choreography. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Marina 1 1. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Marina_1_1.jpg. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
- Activemarker2.png. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/6/6d/Activemarker2.PNG. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Dombis 1687. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dombis_1687.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*
- Jeffwall070305_560.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/en/0/03/Jeffwall070305_560.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- The art of video games exhibition crowd. **Provided by**: Wikimedia. **Located at**: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_art_of_video_games_exhibition_crowd.jpg. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*
- Joan_Jonas_Vertical_Roll.jpg. **Provided by**: Wikipedia. **Located at**: upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/8/8f/Joan_Jonas_Vertical_Roll.jpg. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

This page titled 30.6: New Media for Art is shared under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Boundless via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

Glossary

abstract expressionism | Movement in painting, originating in New York City in the 1940s. It emphasized spontaneous personal expression, freedom from accepted artistic values, surface qualities of paint, and the act of painting itself. Pollock, de Kooning, Motherwell, and Kline, are important abstract expressionists. [Wikipedia]

art deco | Design style prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s, characterized by a sleek use of straight lines and slender form. [Wikipedia]

art nouveau | A decorative art movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Characterized by dense asymmetrical ornamentation in sinuous forms, it is often symbolic and of an erotic nature. Klimt worked in an art nouveau style. [Wikipedia]

Ash Can School | Group of American artists active from 1908 to 1918. It included members of The Eight such as Henri and Davies; Hopper was also part of the Ash Can group. Their work featured scenes of urban realism. [Wikipedia]

Barbizon School | An association of French landscape painters, c. 1840-70, who lived in the village of Barbizon and who painted directly from nature. Theodore Rousseau was a leader; Corot and Millet were also associated with the group. [Wikipedia]

Baroque | A movement in European painting in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, characterized by violent movement, strong emotion, and dramatic lighting and coloring. Bernini, Caravaggio and Rubens were among important baroque artists. [Wikipedia]

Byzantine | A style of the Byzantine Empire and its provinces, c. 330-1450. Appearing mostly in religious mosaics, manuscript illuminations, and panel paintings, it is characterized by rigid, monumental, stylized forms with gold backgrounds. [Wikipedia]

classicism | Referring to the principles of Greek and Roman art of antiquity with the emphasis on harmony, proportion, balance, and simplicity. In a general sense, it refers to art based on accepted standards of beauty. [Wikipedia]

color field painting | A technique in abstract painting developed in the 1950s. It focuses on the lyrical effects of large areas of color, often poured or stained onto the canvas. Newman, Rothko, and Frankenthaler painted in this manner. [Wikipedia]

conceptual art | A movement of the 1960s and 1970s that emphasized the artistic idea over the art object. It attempted to free art from the confines of the gallery and the pedestal. [Wikipedia]

constructivism | A Russian abstract movement founded by Tatlin, Gabo, and Antoine Pevsner, c. 1915. It focused on art for the industrial age. Tatlin believed in art with a utilitarian purpose. [Wikipedia]

cubism | A revolutionary movement begun by Picasso and Braque in the early twentieth century. It employs an analytic vision based on fragmentation and multiple viewpoints. [Wikipedia]

dadaism | A movement, c. 1915-23, that rejected accepted aesthetic standards. It aimed to create antiart and nonart, often employing a sense of the absurd. The Eight A group of American painters who united out of opposition to academic standards in the early twentieth century. Members of the group were Robert Henri, Arthur Davies, Maurice Prendergast, William James Glackens, Ernest Lawson, Everett Shinn, John Sloan, and George Luks. [Wikipedia]

expressionism | Refers to art that uses emphasis and distortion to communicate emotion. More specifically, it refers to early twentieth century northern European art, especially in Germany c. 1905-25. Artists such as Rouault, Kokoschka, and Schiele painted in this manner. [Wikipedia]

fauvism | From the French word fauve , meaning "wild beast ." A style adopted by artists associated with Matisse, c. 1905-08. They painted in a spontaneous manner, using bold colors. [Wikipedia]

folk | art Works of a culturally homogeneous people without formal training, generally according to regional traditions and involving crafts. [Wikipedia]

futurism | An Italian movement c. 1909-19. It attempted to integrate the dynamism of the machine age into art. Boccioni was a futurist artist. [Wikipedia]

Gothic | A European movement beginning in France. Gothic sculpture emerged c. 1200, Gothic painting later in the thirteenth century. The artworks are characterized by a linear, graceful, elegant style more naturalistic than that which had existed previously in Europe. [Wikipedia]

impressionism | A late-nineteenth-century French school of painting. It focused on transitory visual impressions, often painted directly from nature, with an emphasis on the changing effects of light and color. Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro were important impressionists. [Wikipedia]

mannerism | A style, c. 1520-1600, that arose in reaction to the harmony and proportion of the High Renaissance. It featured elongated, contorted poses, crowded canvases, and harsh lighting and coloring. [Wikipedia]

minimalism | A movement in American painting and sculpture that originated in the late 1950s. It emphasized pure, reduced forms and strict, systematic compositions. [Wikipedia]

Nabis | From the Hebrew word for "prophet." A group of French painters active in the 1890s who worked in a subjective, sometimes mystical style, stressing flat areas of color and pattern. Bonnard and Vuillard were members. [Wikipedia]

naive art | Artwork, usually paintings, characterized by a simplified style, nonscientific perspective, and bold colors. The artists are generally not professionally trained. Henri Rousseau and Grandma Moses worked in this style. [Wikipedia]

neoclassicism | A European style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its elegant, balanced works revived the order and harmony of ancient Greek and Roman art. David and Canova are examples of neoclassicists. [Wikipedia]

op art | An abstract movement in Europe and the United States, begun in the mid-1950s, based on the effects of optical patterns. Albers worked in this style. [Wikipedia]

photorealism | A figurative movement that emerged in the United States and Britain in the late 1960s and 1970s. The subject matter, usually everyday scenes, is portrayed in an extremely detailed, exacting style. It is also called superrealism, especially when referring to sculpture. [Wikipedia]

pointillism | A method of painting developed by Seurat and Paul Signac in the 1880s. It used dabs of pure color that were intended to mix in the eyes of viewers rather than on the canvas. It is also called divisionism or neoimpressionism. [Wikipedia]

pop art | A movement that began in Britain and the United States in the 1950s. It used the images and techniques of mass media, advertising, and popular culture, often in an ironic way. Works of Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Oldenburg exemplify this style. [Wikipedia]

postimpressionism | A term coined by British art critic Roger Fry to refer to a group of nineteenth-century painters, including Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, who were dissatisfied with the limitations of expressionism. A movement in France that represented both an extension of Impressionism and a rejection of that style's inherent limitations.It has since been used to refer to various reactions against impressionism, such as fauvism nd expressionism.From the 1880s several artists began to develop different principles for the use of color, pattern, form and line, derived from the Impressionist. [Wikipedia]

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood | A group of English painters formed in 1848. These artists attempted to recapture the style of painting preceding Raphael. They rejected industrialized England and focused on painting from nature, producing detailed, colorful works. Rossetti was a founding member. [Wikipedia]

realism | In a general sense, refers to objective representation. More specifically, a nineteenth century movement, especially in France, that rejected idealized academic styles in favor of everyday subjects. Daumier, Millet, and Courbet were realists. [Wikipedia]

Renaissance | Meaning "rebirth" in French. Refers to Europe c. 1400-1600. Renaissance art which began in Italy, stressed the forms of classical antiquity, a realistic representation of space based on scientific perspective, and secular subjects. The works of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael exemplify the balance and harmony of the High Renaissance (c. 1495-1520). [Wikipedia]

rococo | An eighteenth-century European style, originating in France. In reaction to the grandeur and massiveness of the baroque, rococo employed refined, elegant, highly decorative forms. Fragonard worked in this style. [Wikipedia]

Romanesque | A European style developed in France in the late eleventh century. Its sculpture is ornamental, stylized and complex. Some Romanesque frescoes survive, painted in a monumental, active manner. [Wikipedia]

romanticism | A European movement of the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth century. In reaction to neoclassicism, it focused on emotion over reason, and on spontaneous expression. The subject matter was invested with drama and usually painted energetically in brilliant colors. Delacroix, Gericault, Turner, and Blake were Romantic artists. [Wikipedia]

suprematism | A Russian abstract movement originated by Malevich c. 1913. It was characterized by flat geometric shapes on plain backgrounds and emphasized the spiritual qualities of pure form. [Wikipedia]

surrealism | A movement of the 1920s and 1930s that began in France. It explored the unconscious, often using images from dreams. It used spontaneous techniques and featured unexpected juxtapositions of objects. Magritte, Dali, Miro, and Ernst painted surrealist works. [Wikipedia]

symbolism | A painting movement that flourished in France in the 1880s and 1890s in which subject matter was suggested rather than directly presented. It featured decorative, stylized, and evocative images. [Wikipedia]

Detailed Licensing

Overview

Title: Art History (Boundless)

Webpages: 205

All licenses found:

- CC BY-SA 4.0: 99.5% (204 pages)
- Undeclared: 0.5% (1 page)

By Page

- Art History (Boundless) - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - Front Matter - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - TitlePage - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - InfoPage - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - Table of Contents - *Undeclared*
    - Licensing - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 1: Thinking and Talking About Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.1: What is Art? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.2: Visual Elements - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.3: Content - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.4: Art in Society - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.5: Historical Context - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 2: Prehistoric Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.1: The Stone Age - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.2: The Paleolithic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.3: The Mesolithic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.4: The Neolithic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.5: The Bronze Age - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 3: Art of the Ancient Near East - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.1: Mesopotamia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.2: Assyria - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3: Neo-Babylonia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4: Persia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 4: Ancient Egyptian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.2: The Early Dynastic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3: The Old Kingdom - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.4: The Middle Kingdom - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.5: The New Kingdom - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6: Late Egyptian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 5: Art of the Aegean Civilizations - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.2: Minoan Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.3: Mycenaean Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 6: Ancient Greece - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.1: Introduction to Ancient Greece - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.2: The Geometric Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.3: The Orientalizing Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.4: The Archaic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.5: The Early Classical Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.6: The High Classical Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.7: The Hellenistic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 7: The Etruscans - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 7.1: Early Etruscan Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 7.2: Later Etruscan Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 8: The Romans - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 8.1: The Romans - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 8.2: The Republic - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 8.3: The Early Empire - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 8.4: The Nervan-Antonines - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 8.5: The Decline of the Roman Empire - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 8.6: Early Jewish and Christian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 9: The Byzantines - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 9.1: Early Byzantine Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 9.2: Middle Byzantine Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 9.3: Late Byzantine Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 10: Islamic Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 11: Art of South and Southeast Asia Before 1200 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 11.1: Early Indus Valley Civilizations - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 11.2: Buddhist Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 11.3: Java and Cambodia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 11.4: Art of Southeast Asia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 12: China and Korea After 1279 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 12.1: The Mongols - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 12.2: The Yuan Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 12.3: The Ming Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

- 12.4: The Qing Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.5: Modern Chinese Painting - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.6: Korea- The Joseon Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.7: Modern Korean Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

13: Japan Before 1333 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.1: Prehistoric Japan - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.2: Buddhist Art in Japan - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.3: The Heian Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.4: The Kamakura Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

14: Native-American Art Before 1300 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 14.1: The New World - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 14.2: Mesoamerica - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 14.3: South America - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 14.4: North America - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

15: Africa Before 1800 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 15.1: Ancient Africa - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 15.2: Sculpture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 15.3: Architecture of the Sub-Saharan Civilizations - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

16: Early Medieval Europe - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 16.1: The Early Middle Ages - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 16.2: The Vikings - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 16.3: The Carolingians - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 16.4: The Ottonians - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

17: Romanesque Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 17.1: The Romanesque Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 17.2: Romanesque Architecture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 17.3: Romanesque Sculpture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 17.4: Other Romanesque Arts - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 17.5: Normandy and England - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

18: Gothic Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 18.1: Introduction to Gothic Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 18.2: Gothic Architecture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 18.3: Gothic Sculpture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 18.4: Gothic Painting - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 18.5: Gothic Metalwork - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 18.6: Italy in the Gothic Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

19: The Italian Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 19.1: The Italian Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 19.2: Renaissance Architecture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 19.3: Renaissance Sculpture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 19.4: Renaissance Painting - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 19.5: The High Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 19.6: Mannerism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

20: The Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 20.1: The Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 20.2: Painting in the Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 20.3: Books of the Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 20.4: Architecture of the Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 20.5: Sculpture of the Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 20.6: Textiles of the Northern Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

21: The Baroque Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 21.1: The Baroque Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 21.2: Architecture of the Baroque Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 21.3: Sculpture of the Baroque Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 21.4: Painting of the Baroque Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 21.5: The Dutch Painters - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

22: South and Southeast Asia After 1200 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.1: India - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.2: Jain Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.3: Hindu Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.4: Sultanate of Delhi - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.5: Vijayanagar Empire - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.6: The Nayak Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.7: The Mughal Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.8: India under British Imperialism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.9: Contemporary Indian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.10: Thai Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.11: Burmese Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.12: Vietnamese Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 22.13: Indonesian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

23: Chinese and Korean Art Before 1279 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.1: The Middle Kingdom - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.2: The Neolithic Age - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.3: The Bronze Age - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.4: The Qin Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.5: The Han Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.6: The Six Dynasties Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.7: The Tang Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.8: The Song Dynasty - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 23.9: Korea - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

24: Japan After 1333 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 24.1: The Muromachi Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 24.2: The Momoyama Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 24.3: The Edo Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

- 24.4: The Modern Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 25: The Americas After 1300 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 25.1: Mesoamerica - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 25.2: The Aztecs - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 25.3: The Incas - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 25.4: North America - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 26: Oceania - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.1: The Rise of Pacific Cultures - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.2: Australia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.3: Wood Carving in Oceania - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.4: Polynesia - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.5: Art of New Zealand - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.6: Hawaiian Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 26.7: Modern Oceanic Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 27: Africa in the Modern Period - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 27.1: Religious Art in Africa - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 27.2: African Clothmaking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 27.3: Other African Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 27.4: Contemporary Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 28: European and American Art in the 18th and 19th Centuries - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.1: The Enlightenment - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.2: Rococo - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.3: Neoclassicism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.4: Neoclassicism and Romanticism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.5: The Gothic Revival - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.6: The Empire Style - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.7: Academic Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.8: Realism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.9: Impressionism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.10: The Rise of Modernism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.11: The Beginning of Modern Architecture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 28.12: Photography - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 29: Europe and America from 1900-1950 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.1: European Art in the Early 20th Century - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.2: Europe from 1920-1945 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.3: Modernism in America - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.4: Art in the US during the 1920s and 1930s - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.5: Modern Architecture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.6: Canadian Painting - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.7: The Mexican Renaissance - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.8: Art in Brazil - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.9: Cuban Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 29.10: Abstract Expressionism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 30: Global Art Since 1950 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 30.1: The World Since 1950 CE - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 30.2: The Art World Grows - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 30.3: Dematerialization - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 30.4: Modern Architecture - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 30.5: Postmodernism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 30.6: New Media for Art - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- Back Matter - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - Index - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - Glossary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - Detailed Licensing - *CC BY-SA 4.0*